

Multimodal Capacity Building Program for Library Paraprofessionals in the Philippines: A Case Study

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Abstract

This is a case analysis on the application of a Multimodal Model for Online Education in the conduct of a Capacity Building Program for Library Paraprofessionals in the Philippines. It investigates how the model addressed the varying capabilities of the participants in terms of content knowledge and skills and their technological capabilities and resources.

Findings show that despite meeting all the necessary elements to achieve an effective learning environment, particularly in the design of the training program, certain factors could lead to not fully achieving an effective learning environment.

Keywords: Multimodal Model for Online Learning; Training for Paraprofessionals

INTRODUCTION

The practice of the librarianship profession in the Philippines is governed by existing legislations that require that only licensed librarians can occupy a librarian position in any institution in the country. This restriction also applies to public libraries (PL) and public school libraries (PSL). However, due to the limited number of licensed librarians, very few of them prefer to work in PL and PSL because these state-funded institutions often receive minimal budgets to cover the manpower and operating expenses of these libraries. According to David (2020)

to date, there are approximately more than 9,000 licensed librarians in the Philippines, of which not all are practicing the profession in the country. Some are already retired while others chose to practice abroad or not practice librarianship at all. This figure is not enough to suffice the requirements of all the different types of libraries in the Philippines composed of university and college libraries, primary and secondary school libraries, special libraries, and public libraries. Moreover, these licensed librarians prefer to work in higher education institutions, special libraries, and/or private institutions which offer the

security of tenure and better benefits, which is not often the case in public libraries and public-school libraries. The lack of licensed librarians to man these libraries often result in hiring employees, called paraprofessionals, who do not have the necessary librarianship training but are willing to work and receive a meager salary.

As a result, both public school libraries and public libraries share one big challenge—they lack the qualified manpower to enable these libraries to properly function and serve their purpose. The manpower of these libraries is mainly composed of paraprofessionals, either under the supervision of a licensed librarian or none at all. The training of paraprofessionals is difficult to come by as the options for them in the Philippines are more of pursuing higher education while training and seminars for continuing professional development are for professional librarians which are of the advanced levels. A training program of the basic level was developed to provide the necessary content knowledge and beginner skills for paraprofessionals in public library schools and public libraries in the Philippines. The program was initially designed for an intensive 1-week face-to-face mode but due to the pandemic and quarantine restrictions, it was re-designed for an online platform using Moodle applying the multimodal model for online learning.

This paper presents how the multimodal mode of learning was used for online learning in a mixed capacity participant group which have varying levels of technological resources and skills.

Public Libraries and Public School Libraries in the Philippines

Both public libraries and public school libraries receive their budget for maintenance and operating expenses from the government. Public school libraries (PSL) operate under the Department of Education, which is the national agency for basic education that provides the budget for both manpower and operating expenses of all public school libraries in the country. PSLs are manned by licensed teachers acting as librarians but are not licensed librarians. Timbol (2019) found out that most of the public-school libraries included in the study are manned by full time teachers who have none or minimal training in the management and organization of libraries. Ortego (2016) found that among the school libraries surveyed, 92.24% do not comply with the Standards for Philippine Libraries specific to school libraries.

This may be attributed to the lack of plantilla items for school librarians, as such, they assign teachers to oversee the operations of the libraries on their vacant time. Unlike before when teachers were able to get minor courses in library science, the provisions in Republic Act 9246 (The Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003) no longer allows for such. Only those with bachelor's and/or master's degree in library and information science (LIS) are allowed to take the licensure examination to qualify as librarian. These teachers, who also take the work of school librarians, are dubbed as teacher-librarians. This is also the term for teachers who are also licensed librarians and are mainly given the task to manage the libraries. In private schools, teacher-librarians are almost always a given, and they are those who have dual licenses—as a teacher and as a librarian. Unlike in public school libraries, private school libraries, more often are well-funded, and thus, are required to follow the prevailing standards required by an accrediting body.

Public libraries in the country are usually attached to the local government unit (LGU) where the library is located, thus, dependent on the fund allocation of the said LGU. While it is widely recognized that libraries have socio-cultural and economic benefits in the long term, they are not usually the priority because the results are not immediately and tangibly perceived. They are often bear the brunt of budget cuts or budget and staff re-allocations. Thus, similar to public school libraries, where employees originally hired for a different task are being assigned to the libraries because there are no licensed librarians, or worse, no personnel to manage these libraries. Having different training or educational background, these employees are almost clueless as to how they can efficiently run a public library. Although there are also public libraries that are affiliated with the National Library of the Philippines (NLP), and therefore, receive some assistance from the NLP, the lack of licensed librarians to manage the public libraries remains. A recent report by the NLP (2018) shows that 45% of employees in provincial libraries and 91% of employees in municipal libraries are not licensed librarians. From the report, there are 1,299 non-librarians who are tasked to manage public libraries. To address the lack of training and basic knowledge about library work, the NLP has been conducting several training sessions for these employees to capacitate them to at least keep the libraries open. However, given the uncertainty in the employment of these paraprofessionals, who often are also graduates of other four-year bachelor's programs, decide to

leave, and find more stable jobs. With the high turnover of employees, training should be a continuous process which in turn requires continuous allocation of training funds.

Paraprofessionals in Libraries and their Training and Continuing Education

The term paraprofessional was first documented in Mugnier's (1980) paper and then further discussed a decade later by Oberg et al. (1992). According to the Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science (2014), paraprofessionals in the library setting are:

members of the library support staff, usually those who hold at least the baccalaureate degree, trained to understand specific procedures and apply them according to pre-established rules under normal circumstances without exercising professional judgment. Library paraprofessionals are usually assigned high-level technical support duties, for example, in copy cataloging and serials control. In smaller public library systems in the United States, branch librarians are sometimes paraprofessionals.

While the discussion of paraprofessionals in US libraries seem more complex because of the differing roles that they are given (Zhu, 2012), paraprofessionals in the Philippines can be defined straightforwardly as: those working in libraries who do not hold a license to practice librarianship as they do not have the educational background and therefore not qualified to take the licensure examination. It may be that they are working towards completing an LIS degree or not, but they need the necessary training to function properly in their jobs. While in the US, paraprofessionals may hold supervisory jobs (Weingand, 1992), this case is rare in the Philippines because of the legal restrictions. There are paraprofessionals placed in libraries to augment the library staff due to lack of licensed librarians but there are also those who perform specialized tasks as merited by their educational qualifications such as database and information systems administrators, audio-visual center technicians or specialists or procurement specialists. The former includes those in need of training and/or further education so they can perform their jobs better such as those who are

assigned to manage the libraries even without any background.

Given their limited or lack of formal training in librarianship, paraprofessionals would benefit much from continuing education opportunities which in certain instances have become their motivation to stay in their respective libraries (Kalnin, 1995). In certain countries like Sri Lanka, their paraprofessionals are promoted based on the length of service they rendered in the libraries they serve. As such, the paraprofessionals in Sri Lankan libraries, though unskilled with the basics of librarianship, have acquired practical knowledge over the years they worked in the libraries. While there are incentives to further their education, only a few take advantage of these because they do not immediately see the benefits. As such, Sri Lankan paraprofessionals are trained in-house instead (Weiitunge, 2001).

The need to train paraprofessionals or library technical assistants has been raised as early as the 1970s because of the different backgrounds they have (Breivik, 1976). Alongside this call for training is the call for their career advancements. Paraprofessionals assigned in libraries to augment the library staff need mentoring or training programs to improve their capability to serve their clients. However, mentoring is a difficult alternative since in most cases, there are no licensed librarians, in the case of the Philippines, or trained and educated librarians in the case of other countries to initiate the mentoring. An alternative to formal education programs is post-employment training programs which are contextualized based on the needs of the paraprofessionals (To, 2011).

On the other hand, seminars and conferences have usually been designed by training providers, particularly professional associations, towards career development of professional librarians as indicated by Kalnin (1995) and Oke and Oguntase (2010) and have overlooked the training needs of paraprofessionals. As such, the skill deficiencies of the non-licensed librarians who work in the public libraries and public school libraries may then be augmented by training programs which are short-term and whose benefits can be immediately felt or gauged, and which are outside the context of conferences usually attended by professionals (Oke & Oguntase, 2010).

In developing countries, the more popular training program is a self-sponsored formal educational program which may be done on a part-time or full-

time arrangement (Wanden, 1995). In the Philippines, paraprofessionals are given opportunities to pursue further formal education so they can obtain the needed qualification to be appointed to a librarian position by either taking the Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) as a second degree or taking the graduate level degree—Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS). However, there are only around 80 LIS schools in the Philippines, and not all of these are offering graduate programs in LIS. Also, the length of time required to complete either program is two years or more if they are only pursuing these on a part-time basis. Moreover, even though furthering their education is encouraged, very few, if there are any, libraries which offer a grant to cover their studies. Consequently, most paraprofessionals are discouraged to pursue formal studies especially if they already have a degree prior to working in the library. Thus, the most immediate answer to the lack of necessary librarianship skills is the availability of training programs offered in-house or by professional organizations or learning institutions.

MULTIMODAL MODEL FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Multimodal teaching enables students to learn by incorporating various modalities such as image, sound, action, etc. and it is where teachers not only impart knowledge but also select, cooperate, and demonstrate multimodality (Liu, 2021). Multimodal learning involves the use of several elements in the delivery of learning such as text, audio, video, and other materials. This can be seen in classrooms at all levels of learning where textbooks, photographs, songs, videos, PowerPoint presentations, games, and other materials are used allowing for flexibility and acknowledging the different ways by which students learn (Sankey & Birch, 2008). The developments in information and communications technologies ushered in a multitude of resources to enhance the delivery of learning. These developments have also enabled distance education to progress from print-based to online and interactive modes. Another development in online education is the massive open online courses (MOOCs) which also use multiple modalities and are made available to wider audiences as such, a reasonable option for continuing education.

Picciano (2009) proposed his Blending with Purpose model as a “conceptual model for designing and developing blended learning courses and programs” (p. 16). The goal of this is to enable the learners to “experience learning in ways they are most

comfortable while challenging them to experience and learn in other ways” (Picciano, 2009, p. 7). The Blending with Purpose model incorporates the varying ways by which technology is used in blended learning, the generational differences in terms of technology appreciation and use, as well as the divergent learning styles and capacities (mental and social) of the learners allowing flexibility in the delivery of learning. The model was later re-examined and updated to address new developments and issues in online education. Picciano (2017) then came up with the Multimodal Model for Online Education which is an improvement of his previous model integrating blended learning and online/distance learning elements and incorporating behaviorist, cognitivist and social constructivist learning theories. The model considers the course or the program as a learning community where learners, teachers, learning materials, etc. interact. The content is the “primary driver of instruction” (Picciano, 2017, p. 179) which can be learned through collaboration, or via self-paced modes. Different courses do not necessarily apply the same modalities or use all the modalities. This model was applied in the design of the Capacity Building Program for Library Paraprofessionals in the Philippines given their varying experiences, capabilities, capacities, and preferences.

Some Concerns in Online Learning

Online learning is one of the options for paraprofessionals for their professional development and continuing education since this is convenient. Online learning can be self-paced and does not cost travel time. There are formal online or distance courses and programs available and there are also short courses.

MOOCs have been around for about two decades now and with the current situation brought about by the pandemic, it would seem like continuing education programs would be having such a similar format, if not massive open online, at least just online courses. The overall motivations of those taking courses from these platforms include knowledge, work, and convenience while the barriers include lack of time, bad previous experience, online format, and inadequate background (Ibegbulam & Eze, 2016). While MOOCs can be convenient and more widespread in their availability, it was found that completion rates are low and dropout rates are high (Jordan, 2014; Shapiro et al., 2017). However, due to its reach, the significant uses and functionalities of MOOCs are still valuable. Those who have completed MOOCs have reported career and

educational benefits (Zhenghao et al., 2015). MOOCs like that of Coursera are widely available and can be free, which can be a source of learning. But there are only a few topics for new librarians as well as paraprofessionals. Moreover, the free courses do not provide certificates/accreditation resulting in the participants' lack of motivation to pursue or commit to the program (Gray, 2014). Therefore, the motivation to learn is a significant factor that should be present in the online learning process, especially in a self-paced online learning environment. The motivation to learn is also related to how they see themselves in relation to where they are now and how their peers and supervisors support them in their endeavors (To, 2011).

According to education theorists, effective learning environments may be viewed based on four different perspectives, being community-centered, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, and assessment-centered (Bransford et al., 1999). The same may be applied to online learning where all these lenses may be considered to ensure the effectiveness of a training program in terms of maximized learning and community benefit. Likewise, these lenses of effective learning environments were also considered in an online setting wherein a Multimodal Model of Online Learning was proposed. This model "is flexible and assumes that other modules can be added as needed and where appropriate" (Picciano, 2017, p. 178). Also, "the most important feature of this model is that pedagogy drives the approaches that will work best to support student learning (Picciano, 2017, p. 178). Being able to blend the objectives, activities and other learning events in multiple modalities can be effectively given to a wide range of students (Picciano, 2017). In addition, "the model contains six basic pedagogical goals, and approaches for achieving them, to form learning modules" (Picciano, 2017, p. 178). And these modules are content, dialectics or questioning, reflection, collaborative learning, evaluation, and social and emotional support to students (Picciano, 2017).

The UP School of Library and Information Studies Capacity Building Programs for Paraprofessionals
Working on the foregoing perspectives about online training and capacity building as a venue for the effective learning environment, the University of the Philippines School of Library and Information Studies (UP SLIS) conducted a capacity building training program for public library and public school library paraprofessionals which was funded by the National Committee on Library and Information Services of the

National Commission for Culture and the Arts in 2020. This capacity building program for paraprofessionals for public libraries and public school libraries was conducted concurrently over an eight-week training period.

The training for paraprofessionals in public libraries and public-school libraries were intended to train non-licensed librarian personnel in both types of libraries to give them knowledge of the basics of organizing and managing libraries. These topics are given in the core courses of the Bachelor of Library and Information Science and are not provided in any workshop or training (i.e., continuing education program) for licensed librarians, as these are very basic. This training program was proposed to enable them to earn formal academic units, as a prelude to pursuing a formal program of studies in LIS (i.e., Master in Library and Information Science or ETEEAP in Library and Information Science for PSL paraprofessionals). Likewise, this is a short-term solution until the LGUs and the Department of Education can employ licensed librarians.

This capacity building had a five-part module that covered the basics of public library organization, management, and services. The final module was the capstone project of individual participants which they brought back to their respective libraries. There were four (4) main topics for learning, and these included: The Basics of a Library; Organizing the Collection; Improving the Collection; and The Library Clients. All of these included lectures in the form of lesson modules in Moodle along with discussion forums, activities, exercises, and workshop modules. The main output of the program was a three-year development plan of the library which includes a SWOT analysis of the library as the basis for the development plan. This was planned for a 1-week face-to-face intensive training but due to quarantine restrictions, this was converted to an online set of modules mainly via a learning management system (LMS).

Multimodal Model and its application to the Capacity Building Program for Paraprofessionals
Considering that the participants in the program have varying skills and content knowledge, the multimodal model for online learning was adopted to ensure that the proper transfer of knowledge will be achieved. The training was originally intended for a 1-week intensive engagement with the participants but due to strict quarantine restrictions not allowing group gatherings for whatever

purpose, this was converted to online training. Given the variety of capabilities and capacities of the participants, and educational qualifications, the multimodal mode of online learning seemed to suit the situation considering that the original plan for the training was face-to-face which had participation events, reaction, and interaction through workshop sessions aside from the lecture sessions and consultations with the facilitators. Having a variety of learning modalities in an online setting via LMS would cover the variety of skills and contexts that the participants have.

Synchronous modes were available during the introduction of the lessons and kept to a minimum

because not all participants were able to join. The concentration of efforts was in the development of modules where the participants have activities after each lesson. The activities include discussion forums (i.e., describing their library and collection with an emphasis on strengths and weaknesses), workshops (i.e., presenting a collection development plan for comments of peers), reflection sessions (i.e., what have I learned in this lesson), and exercises for skills development (i.e., providing a bibliographic description of resources).

It can be said that all the elements of a multimodal model of online learning were incorporated into the modules for the training program. The social and

Figure 1

Adaptation of Picciano's Multimodal Model of Learning



emotional support came in the form of email and SMS messages between participants and facilitators and support staff. The modules were self-paced with activities and exercises to evaluate and assess the learning of the participants. There was collaboration and peer review in the discussion forums and workshops and reflection was also seen in the learning logs and/or reaction papers. While the dialectic could not be widely implemented in all modules, some have this aspect during the limited synchronous sessions. The adaptation of Picciano's (2017) Multimodal Model for online learning as applied in the training program is illustrated in Figure 1.

The Capacity Building Program for Paraprofessionals in PSL and PL ticks out the elements of a Multimodal Model of Online Learning which are centered on content, dialectics or questioning, reflection, collaborative learning, evaluation, and social and emotional support to learners. Specifically, participant engagement and achievements in relation to the multimodal model of online learning were measured by taking into consideration the differences in capacities and capabilities of the participants in terms of technological devices and skill levels. The success of the model was measured through the extent of engagement of the participants and the extent of their learning in terms of their output and completed activities. Moreover, this mode of analysis of the effectiveness of the Capacity Building Program was also complemented by a post-training evaluation survey which the participants were required to complete after the training.

Likewise, the facilitators and support staff were interviewed about their observations and experiences in interacting with the participants, implementing the modules, and the extent to which the participants engaged with other participants during the training period.

OBSERVATIONS

The training was conducted online given the restrictions on travel, mass gatherings, and other concerns. Being the first online training for this type, modules were developed, and the online learning management system materials were produced. Given that the participants could not go online eight hours a day, the training was designed with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning. Moodle was used as the LMS for the Capacity Building Program.

Invitations to the Capacity Building Program were sent to the Department of Education regional offices and to the NLP and its satellite public libraries. Promotional materials were also posted on the UP SLIS website and Facebook account and social media accounts of different professional associations for librarians. The goal was to invite as many participants as possible given its online platform. As a result, it received an overwhelming response with 469 public school libraries (PSL) paraprofessionals and 299 public libraries (PL) paraprofessionals who registered. The prospect of being able to finish a training program at their most convenient time from the comfort of their own homes was perceived as an opportunity to learn and develop their skills.

Moreover, the high turnout of registrants may also be attributed to the awareness of an incentive, a grant of internet data subsidy for all participants who would be able to complete the requirements of the training program.

However, came the opening session, which was done online via Zoom, and only 329 participants attended. The number further dwindled as the training progressed.

Table 1
Status of Completion

	Public School Library	Public Library
Number of Registrants	469	299
Participants Successfully Enrolled in Moodle	140	68
Dropout Rate (from registration in Moodle)	70.15%	77.25%
Completion	49	30
Completion Rate (from Moodle to Completion)	65%	55.88%

Status of Completion

There was an overwhelming response from participants when we opened the registration. However, after the orientation and after the participants were asked to enlist in Moodle, the number of participants immediately dwindled. Table 1 shows a matrix of the status of completion.

The dropout rate is high but not as high as the ones documented by Coursera (Zhenghao et al., 2015) which is at a 95% dropout rate. The completion rate of 65% for PSL and 55.88% for PL can be considered a significant achievement. However, it would have been better if more registrants were able to participate and complete the training program. Among the possible reasons for this low turnout include:

1. non-familiarity of registrants with the Moodle platform;
2. required activities that they needed to complete including the capstone project toward the end of the program;
3. lost internet connectivity due to the typhoon which ravaged a big part of the country a week prior to the holding of the opening session; and
4. the current work from home set-up rendered participants to become more preoccupied with household concerns on top of the work they needed to do which resulted on limited time of engagement with Moodle.

Overall Course Engagement

The overall training program was implemented over a four-month period including the pre-program planning activities. The actual training was conducted from November to December of 2020 to accommodate online plenary sessions, video lectures, small group discussions, exercises, workshops, break-out sessions, one on one consultations, and other modes of learning as deemed necessary.

There were four main topics for learning, and these included: The Basics of a Library; Organizing the Collection; Improving the Collection; and The Library Clients. All of these included lectures in the form of lesson modules in Moodle along with discussion forums, activities, exercises, and workshop modules. The main output of the program was a three-year development plan of the library which includes a SWOT analysis of the library as the basis for the development plan.

To encourage interaction among participants the following activities were also held:

1. Online Fora: Participants were allowed to post their concerns or comments about the lectures. This way, shared concerns were discussed or resolved right away.
2. Workshops: These activities became a venue for participants to share their outputs and to positively critique each other's assignments with the end view of improving them.
3. One-on-One Consultation: Participants were also encouraged to schedule a one-on-one consultation with the resource speakers concerning their assignments and especially with the capstone projects.

At first, the participants were adamant to use the online discussion forum in Moodle, however, after a few initial answers, the discussion forum was active. There were several discussions fora available: a) Introduce yourself; b) ask-answer type of forum with opinion on a given topic (i.e., Describe your library collection. Where do you source out your collection and how does your clientele use these?); and c) questions and suggestions (i.e., how to submit output). The facilitators and participants interacted in these discussion fora.

Workshops in Moodle were also set up for each of the main topics. While the program was self-paced, it followed deadlines for submission. The workshop for the first topic on the Basics of the Library was a SWOT analysis output. However, it appeared that some were not familiar with how to conduct this and were apprehensive about their work—whether they were doing it right or wrong. Thus, it presented a roadblock in the program, and it affected the submission for the other activities. The workshop was not properly actualized because of this. Only the facilitator saw the submissions and gave feedback. There were also instances when the participants submitted all exercises and workshop outputs all at once toward the end of the program limiting the interaction between the facilitator and participant.

One-on-one consultations were also held in a very flexible manner. Various modes were used, and these include e-mail, Zoom video calls, and instant messaging. The consultations were also done in the discussion forum for comments, questions, and suggestions.

Modalities in the Online Training Program

The Multimodal Model for Online Learning includes the aspects of the online environment via Moodle, and the various modes for teaching, learning, participation, and assessment which is seen in Figure 1. This section describes the aspects of the model as implemented in the program.

Moodle was selected as the LMS for the program as it had various modules to facilitate teaching and learning in an online environment. There were various ways of presenting the lessons—either as file uploads, pages, or lesson modules. There were also various ways for participants and learners to interact within Moodle and this makes them a learning community by way of their interaction. Course packs in PDF were also distributed to the participants as an alternative to Moodle due to Internet connectivity and device issues. Some of them only had pre-paid connections and were using mobile phones to access Moodle. Having the course packs in pdf allows them to read and go through the lessons and exercises offline and submit exercises and activities only when online.

Social and Emotional Support was available in various events within the training. During the live sessions, the lecturers and participants became acquainted with one another. The lecturer would start the session by asking the participants about their day and discussion would ensue. A friendly and relaxed environment was somehow established. The participants would continue their discussions and reactions in the discussion forums available in Moodle.

Synchronous lecture sessions were available via Zoom but recorded video lectures were also uploaded in Moodle for those who were not able to join the synchronous sessions. One-on-one consultations were also available in various formats. Through these synchronous lectures and meetings, the dialectical process was implemented but not for all participants. However, the discussion forum of the ask-and-answer types were available and somehow facilitated this, but it was on an asynchronous mode where feedback was not instant. These however may have facilitated the reflection mode for the students when they answered the questions and read their peers' answers and the facilitators' feedback.

While the program was designed to be self-paced it still followed schedules. However, due to limitations

in technological resources and skills, the participants encountered roadblocks and the schedules were not followed thus limiting certain modules and modalities in terms of their implementation.

Collaboration was designed to be present in the workshop modules but due to the roadblocks, these were not accomplished. However, the discussion forum was active and may have accomplished some collaboration there.

Reasons for Completing or Not Completing the Program

The top reason for the PSL paraprofessionals is their desire to learn which made them persevere to finish the requirements. For the PL paraprofessionals, the top reason is their need to be prepared for the tasks they are given. The PSL paraprofessionals are more internally motivated as opposed to the PL who are motivated externally. It also helped that the participants set a particular time for the workshop, as it is an online self-paced program.

From both groups of participants, the main reason for not completing the program is their internet connection. Since this program was on Moodle, they were required to go online to read the lessons online or at least download the lessons in pdf for them to read offline. They also need to go online to answer the forum in each module, participate in online workshops in Moodle, comment on at least three submissions of their peers, etc. A secondary reason for not being able to complete was the fact that the participants had so much to do and that they did not have time to finish the tasks.

Perspectives of the Trainers and Support Staff

The trainers have expressed their views on how the training was conducted. The main concern was in developing the course objectives and activities because of the training levels and expertise of the participants. Based on the PSL profile, there were graduates of Master in Education and also some who have units in Ph.D. while some are entry-level with only a few years of experience in teaching. They also have varying years of experience in managing the library but equally limited knowledge in the technical aspects of acquiring, organizing, and circulating the collection among other services. While the objective of having a large-scale online training program was to have many participants be trained at the same time, in a self-paced mode, given the limited knowledge, small-scale training would be more effective.

The support staff also had difficulty with the orientation of the participants in the use of Moodle. While everyone was shifting to remote learning, their platform of choice was the more accessible Google Classroom. It was wrong to assume that the participants can easily navigate the modules once set up in Moodle. We have overlooked the digital divide between the facilitators and learners as well as among the learners. There are differences in the capacities and capabilities of the learners which were not obvious when they registered for the course but became very obvious once they started interacting with Moodle.

ANALYSIS

The Multimodal Model of Online Learning adopted by UP SLIS in the conduct of Capacity Building for Paraprofessionals in PSL and PL was intended to meet the requirements of an effective learning environment and at the same time ensure flexibility of teaching methodology to meet the learning requirements of the participants. With its main objective to equip the paraprofessionals with the necessary skills to keep the libraries, they serve in operation; the Program has met the criterion for community-centeredness of the program. Further, acknowledging the specific knowledge requirements of the targeted participants, and ensuring that all their concerns were addressed during the conduct of the fora, workshops and consultations were efforts to make the Capacity Building Program learner-centered and knowledge-centered. Lastly, the giving of assignments and exercises and giving one on one feedback only proved that it also ticked the box for being assessment centered.

There were other factors that affected the maximum delivery of the learning outcomes. Firstly, the digital divide that is very prevalent in the country. Despite the promised incentive for those who would be able to finish the Program, only 65% and 55.88% respectively, of those who were able to register to Moodle were able to complete it. At the onset of the Program, a big number of registrants were not able to attend the opening session due to slow internet connectivity because of the strong typhoon which damaged some of the electric posts and towers of internet providers in different parts of the country.

Secondly, the unfamiliarity of participants with Moodle also posed a challenge among the participants. The registration to Moodle also became a reason to shy

away from the online training. Although a familiarity session was held to help those who are not yet familiar with Moodle, the actual navigation during the online training became a challenge.

Thirdly, the participants were participating in this training while performing their tasks in their respective offices, or homes. Some were also attending seminars mandated by their offices in lieu of their “normal” 8 to 5 jobs. It would seem that they were overwhelmed with the training in as much as this was not the usual seminar type where they will only listen to the speaker and provide feedback. The training was more intensive than what they may have expected.

To address the first two challenges, course packs in PDF were emailed to the participants, and they were allowed to submit their assignments via email. This limited their interaction with Moodle and the learning community. There was no interaction with their fellow participants thus the element of collaboration and community was limited thereby enabling self-paced learning. However, it would seem that with the set of participants, self-paced learning is not effective.

Another factor may be attributed to the prevailing cultural values of Filipinos (Church, 1986) of the primacy of the family. With the current work-from-home set-up, the participants were made to do their work, participate in the Program, and at the same time, do household chores. For most Filipinos, family duties often come first over other duties especially if these are done in the comfort of their homes. The current setup has presented greater challenges in terms of time management and prioritization. Despite the opportunity to be trained for free, and with certificates and incentives, few were able to complete the Program. Another cultural aspect to be explored is collaboration and peer review where Filipinos may be too nice to give proper feedback. In the forum, the feedback and comments were supportive and only the facilitators gave negative feedback. Another cultural aspect is the *ningas cogon* attribute where Filipinos are said to start something and not see it through. In this case, the participants started the program but did not complete it because they might have lost interest.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Multimodal Model for Online Education was implemented in the Capacity Building Program for Library Paraprofessionals whose participants have varied experiences, capabilities, capacities, and

preferences. These differences should have been addressed in the flexible delivery of learning, assessment, and activities of interaction to enable the successful completion of the program. While self-paced learning is among the modalities, this somehow was not viable with the set of participants.

Further studies on the application of the model need to be conducted to explore the outcomes of its implementation. In the case of this study, it is possible that the modalities were not exhausted well enough to enable more participation from the trainees given the quarantine restrictions and connectivity issues. Further exploration can also be done in relation to the nature, culture, and/or values of the learners given the observation of the possible influence of Filipino values in the participation in online courses.

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