

# A Narrative Inquiry on the Progressive Opening of Onsite Classes in a State University in the Philippines

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## Abstract

The decline in COVID-19 cases has led to schools worldwide opening their doors to onsite learning. The progressive opening of classes in schools during the offset of the pandemic is still crucial because it is a phase of testing the waters for stakeholders' safe return to traditional onsite classes. In this paper, the progressive opening of onsite classes in a state university in the Philippines is described. A qualitative-narrative inquiry design was used to document the narratives of 10 participants of this study. Five teachers and five students were interviewed, memoranda issued by the university president and vice president for academic affairs were collected, and later thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview transcript. The findings revealed that cyclical shifting of class schedules was implemented. Both teachers and students encountered challenges; however, they could cope with them as they saw opportunities in the progressive opening of onsite classes. The findings of this study could serve as baseline data for academics for similar pervasive academic disruptions.

**Keywords:** narrative inquiry, onsite classes, state university, education, Philippines

## 1. Introduction

The decreasing number of COVID-19-positive cases has led to the progressive opening of onsite classes in the Philippines as instructed by the Philippine educational government agencies such as the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). It is still necessary to return safely to onsite sessions from the various distance learning modes brought about by the COVID-19 epidemic. According to Estrellado (2021), educational institutions made the decision to include health-related activities in their policies and programmes because they wanted to return to the way education had taken place before the COVID-19 pandemic. The Departments of Health (DOH) and Education (DepEd) jointly prepared memos and instructions, and when pilot testing for in-person classes started, the DepEd-DOH circular no. 1 series of 2021 was issued. The DOH urged educational systems to create emergency plans, health protocol intervention techniques, and budgets for the purchase of medical equipment, as well as embracing the shared responsibility principle among the stakeholders before classes start.

Joaquin et al. (2020) report that during the outbreak, over 2,400 higher education institutions (HEIs) were home to an estimated 3.5 million college students. These HEIs adapted their policies and procedures to ensure the delivery of education despite the COVID-19 limits in light of the

return of classes after the epidemic. Among these policies are modified ways of learning. For the safe transition from distance online learning to onsite learning, the university or the research locale chose to establish a hybrid learning mode. Heng et al. (2020) claimed that "hybrid" or "blended" learning is currently the most popular kind of training. Technology, social media tools, and Internet access are essential to blended and hybrid learning.

The issues related to the need for a new pedagogy have been progressively addressed by hybrid learning, namely the emergence of online and face-to-face (FTF) instruction. However, hybrid learning is more than just combining online and face-to-face training. Instead, it focuses on maximizing the accomplishment of learning objectives through the use of "right" learning technologies to match the "right" learning to the "right" person at the "right" moment (Graham, 2005). This concept's definition—the deliberate fusion of FTF and online learning experiences—is incorporated into it (Bersin, 2004). The fundamental idea is that FTF oral and online written communication are best linked, combining their strengths to provide a special learning experience consistent with the context and intended educational aims (Bonk et al., 2006).

This approach also includes two additional models: (a) adjunct, in which online meetings supplement traditional courses, and (b) mixed, in which a significant portion of FTF instruction is replaced by online meetings (Ho & Burniske, 2005). The two techniques have different levels of networking integration in the courses. Adjunct courses provide a few networking utilities as extras to the main course, whereas mixed-mode courses include networking utilities as significant and well-integrated parts of the entire course (Ausburn, 2004).

For undergraduate teacher education, the latter two "hybrid models" have grown in popularity (Peterson & Bond, 2004), while some academics do not make such clear distinctions and instead refer to any course that mixes traditional FTF instruction with online technologies as a "hybrid" (Swenson & Evans, 2003). While the concept of hybrid learning may seem intuitively simple and obvious, putting it into practice is more difficult. Less in-person class time is spent during hybrid courses, with a significant amount of that time being spent on online learning activities (Allan, 2006). Because hybrid learning combines the best aspects of traditional and Web-based learning to create and support essential communities of inquiry, many higher education institutions are now quietly positioning themselves to take advantage of this revolutionary potential (Clark & Mayer, 2007).

The progressive opening of onsite classes in schools during and right after the pandemic is crucial since it is testing the waters for school stakeholders' safety, especially the students and teachers. To gain ideas about how other institutions deal with the issue, both locally and internationally, an exploration of related literature and studies was conducted.

According to Gopez (2021), only students taking allied health and medical courses could attend face-to-face classes in the Philippines. Only physical operations of schools with programmes in medicine, nursing, medical technology, medical laboratory science, physical therapy, midwifery, and public health were permitted to attend classes in regions subject to general community quarantine and modified general community quarantine. Collaboration between universities and local government agencies was required, with a contingency plan to restart the limited physical classes. Any school that disregarded the guidelines for maintaining student health and other requirements outlined in the circular could be suspended immediately by CHED. As they recognized that the progressive reopening of face-to-face classes was necessary to regain a sense of normalcy in the middle of a pandemic, the Philippine government made an effort to increase the number of health workers throughout this pandemic.

In addition, Melnick and Darling-Hammond (2020) provided documentation on opening schools in various nations during the COVID-19 pandemic. They documented that in China, the initial reopening of schools was permitted in areas that could satisfy the following two requirements: if officials found the risk to be low, and if schools would take the usual safety precautions. Additionally, teachers and students could return to schools as early as April 15, 2020 in Denmark, the first European nation to resume classes after a break. Only younger students returned to class in the first phase of the school's reopening, while older students continued their distance learning at home. Younger children returned to school first since it was believed that they posed fewer health hazards, benefitted less from distant learning, and required more parental supervision. Also, Norway permitted Grades 1-4 (ages 6–11) to begin classes on April 27, 2020, and daycare and preschools to begin operations on April 20, 2020 in areas with low infection rates. Grades 5 through 10 continued online learning. However, in Singapore, schools remained open as COVID-19 expanded, eventually closing on April 8, 2020, concurrent with the country's partial shutdown with "Circuit Breaker" measures, as learners shifted to home-based study. The administration declared that schools would be closed until the first week of May. With the recognition of only eight school-age infections not linked to schools, they did not seem to have been a source of disease transmission. Last but not least, it has been acknowledged that Taiwan, using the same approach it used during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, effectively reduced the spread of COVID-19 with national regulations that prevented broadly planned school closures. Taiwan mandated temporary local class or school closures based on local infection rates along with in-school health and safety measures rather than a nationwide shutdown.

In the locale of the study, memoranda issued by the Office of the University President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs informed about the Midterm Cyclical Schedule. Prior to the opening of limited face-to-face classes, the university president issued university memorandum no. 07 series of 2022 in preparation for opening classes for SY 2022-2023. The university adopted a blended learning mode for the conduct of classes in the first semester of the school year 2022-2023. According to the schedule, "The blended mode of instruction (aka hybrid mode) is a combination of onsite or face-to-face mode and purely online modality. Most contact hours will be in an onsite setting but with requirements for a synchronous and asynchronous online participation and components. Under the hybrid scheme, fifty per cent of the contact/teaching hours will be made face-to-face or onsite, while the remaining contact hours will be specifically examinations, and other educational endeavours essential to the maximum learning of the students." The online mode, on the other hand, can be done in a synchronous manner with an asynchronous component to supplement the synchronous mode. "Lectures, presentations, discussions, and other appropriate activities fitted for this modality are suggested to be addressed in this component."

In addressing the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force on COVID-19 (IATF) on the maximum indoor capacity of 100 per cent, a cyclical shifting model/class schedule was also considered in implementing the hybrid modality. "Under this model, the student population of the university was divided into two groups. One group includes the 2nd, 4th and 5th year college levels together with grades 8, 10, and 12. The other group belongs the 1st and 3rd year college level and grades 7, 9 and 11. Both groups shall conduct online classes in the first two weeks, where the usual class orientation and other preliminaries such as discussion on the syllabus, grading system, house rules are expected to happen. However, the week after the orientation (Sept. 5-10); the 2nd, 4th and 5th year levels and grades 8, 10, and 12, shall conduct their classes face-to-face, while the 1st and 3rd year college and grades 7, 9 and 11, shall have their classes purely online. The following week (Sept. 12-17), the first group will have their turn in the online mode while the second group

will have their face-to-face set-up. This alternate schedules of online and onsite mode between the two groups shall be implemented until the last week of the first semester.”

As regards the final term cyclical schedule, the vice president for academic affairs also issued VPAA memo no. 67 series of 2022 to discuss a revised cyclical shifting schedule for the remaining nine (9) weeks was designed to incorporate additional Face to Face sessions for all programmes covering all year levels. The implementation date for the said enhancement was set to begin on October 24, 2022. “The reasons for the said modification are to address other student concerns which may include the need for consultation, remediation, and support on both their curricular and extracurricular endeavours to serve as a mitigating means in addressing the pressing problems faced by university students and other encountered challenges through scheduled consultative sessions as well as to contribute to the local and provincial economic boost.”

The review of related literature and studies confirmed that schools worldwide were very cautious of health concerns before the implementation of onsite classes. Policies and guidelines were developed to guarantee the orderly and secure start of onsite classes.

This synthesis presents the gap that this study wished to address. Related studies have focused on experiences of international schools in their progressive opening of onsite classes at different educational levels. Moreover, no study could be explored as regards the experiences of local schools’ progressive opening of onsite of classes either in private or public institutions. In relation to this study, the Philippines was one of the last countries to permit onsite instruction. Because of this, this study is important for describing how one of the state universities in the Philippines implemented the progressive opening of onsite classes and the experiences of teachers and students as they transitioned back to traditional onsite classes after a protracted period of distance learning.

## **1.1 Research Questions**

The study focused on the progressive reopening of onsite classes at a state university in the Philippines, a significant topic as the country was one of the last to resume in-person instruction. This research aimed to describe how the university implemented this transition and captured the experiences of both teachers and students as they returned to traditional onsite learning after an extended period of distance education.

This research paper answered the following questions:

1. What are the school-related challenges encountered by teachers and students during the progressive opening of onsite classes?
2. How are the school-related challenges of teachers and students solved?
3. What opportunities do teachers and students gain in the progressive opening of onsite classes?

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Research design**

This paper used a qualitative-narrative inquiry design to determine the underlying meaning through narrative of people’s experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Using this design, the personal stories of teachers and students were described. By sharing their real-life experiences, participants in narrative inquiry are given a forum to express their opinions and strengthen their voice without feeling censored or afraid. In order to accomplish this, it is ideal for the researcher and participant to have an active working relationship in which the researcher continuously discusses the participant's tales and considers the participant's personal, social, and political context (Wang & Geale, 2015). Wang and Geale (2015) further emphasized that this method is more concerned with

the underlying meaning than it is with the details or veracity of the participant testimonies. The participants' constructed narratives shed light on the intricate nature of the event and the beliefs that are typically formed through actions rather than verbal expression. The researcher believed that it was the ideal design since it gave participants an opportunity to share their lived experiences through detailed and vivid stories.

The study's rigour was demonstrated by conformability, credibility, and transferability. Transferability was evident in the way that participants discussed their experiences, difficulties, and strategies for coping as the onsite classes began to open up. This allowed for the formation of meaningful clusters and groupings based on the main ideas that were presented. A rechecking technique ensured the conformability of the findings transcribed during the semi-structured interviews. The transcripts were presented to the participants to verify data for their truthfulness and accuracy in order to achieve holistic credibility.

## **2.2 Participants**

The study had 10 participants, consisting of five teachers and five students, they were selected based on inclusion criteria. For the teachers, they should have permanent status and full teaching loads, while students were bona fide, in good academic standing, and enrolled regularly at the university. Faculty participants were coded as T1 to T5, and student participants as S1 to S5. Citing Creswell (2013), the study emphasized the importance of a small sample size for obtaining in-depth responses in qualitative research. Following Dukes' proposition, the study adhered to the recommendation of using three to ten key sources for phenomenological research.

## **2.3 Instruments**

To obtain the data needed to conduct the study, an interview guide was utilized. The interview guide was developed by the researcher with consideration for the goal of the study, the problem overview, and the review of relevant studies and literature. After that, the interview guide was run through an evaluation process with the assistance of three (3) research specialists.

## **2.4 Data Collection**

Permission to conduct the study was first sought from the relevant administrators, ensuring compliance with institutional guidelines and securing necessary approvals. Once permission was granted, the researcher reached out to the selected teachers and students to obtain their consent and participation in the study. An interview schedule was carefully planned, allowing for structured and consistent data collection from each participant. The researcher conducted individual interviews with each participant, dedicating 30 minutes to each session to ensure a thorough exploration of their experiences. During the interviews, the researcher used a phone as a recording device, ensuring accurate capture of the discussions while maintaining a discreet and efficient process. Before the interviews, participants were briefed on the study's objectives and assured that their data would be treated with complete confidentiality.

## **2.5 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were observed in conducting this study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the study's execution, confidentiality of the research data was guaranteed, biases and other misleading material were avoided, and other works and studies that were used in this study were properly cited.

## **2.6 Data Analysis**

Terry et al.'s (2017) thematic analysis (TA) was used to extract concepts, categories, and themes from the collected data. First, the researcher had to be familiarized with the data; second, codes were generated; third, the researcher searched for themes; fourth, the potential themes were

reviewed; fifth, the themes were defined, named, and analyzed. Finally, the researcher presented the report in the manuscript.

### 3. Findings

This section presents the key findings derived from the researcher's analysis of the interview transcripts. Through a detailed examination of the recorded conversations, the researcher identified significant themes and insights that reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of the study's focus.

#### 3.1. Teachers' School-Related Challenges on the Implementation of Progressive Opening of Onsite Classes

**Transportation.** Some participants reported that transportation was one of their challenges in the progressive opening of onsite classes. They revealed that they needed to allocate extra budget for gasoline and travelling to school.

*"I need to allot budget for gas." T1*

*"Compared to online class, one of the significant adjustment that I have experience in the progressive opening of onsite classes is time of travel-going to school." T2*

*"Time and travel, time and travel because on my part during online class I stayed at Mexico Pampanga so that on online class I adjust my time and travel-going to school." T4*

**Time Concerns.** Time also challenged some teachers because they needed to prepare earlier compared to when they were working at home. A participant shared that he needed to adjust his time preparation because of the distance of his home from the school:

*"I need to get up earlier on time." T1*

*"Time and travel, time and travel because on my part during online class I stayed at Mexico Pampanga so that on online class I adjust my time and travel-going to school." T4*

**Students' Concerns.** A participant shared that some students were frequently absent as a result of illness. A participant also noted that there was a significant decrease in academic competencies among students who relied on online classes. This is evident in the following:

*"Students are always absent and their reason is they are not feeling well." T2*

*"The most challenging part of the progressive implementation is the significant decrease of academic competencies of the students who are relying on online classes." T5*

**Health Protocols.** Even though health protocols are meant to safeguard teachers from contracting infectious diseases in an onsite setting, they mentioned that these protocols also add to their challenges when discussing the lesson in class, particularly regarding the wearing of facemasks:

*"Having hard time discussing the lessons wearing facemask given that its hot inside the classrooms." T2*

*"Wearing facemask during discussion is one of my challenges during onsite classes, because it is very hard to teach." T3*

#### 3.2 Students' School-Related Challenges on the Implementation of Progressive Opening of Onsite Classes

**Sleeping Schedule.** The students reported that they had to make adjustments to their sleeping schedule. They shared that they needed to wake up early to get dressed and prepare for school transportation:

*"adjustments of sleep schedules" S1*

*"My adjustment I need to wake up early to prepare my uniform" S4*

*"I needed to get to sleep earlier than usual" S5*

**Allowance.** The students mentioned that budgeting their allowance was very difficult. They had to pay for food, transportation, load, and for other school expenses. Inflation adds to the students' financial burden:

*"we spend money on food, transportation, school activities" S1*

*"lack of funds because I had to buy load for my online class, fee for the fare of the jeep, and have limited options for public transportation." S2*

*"Budgeting my daily allowance is difficult because every now and then, the prices of basically everything inflate, from foods to public transportation and more" S5*

**Social Adjustments.** The students shared that since they had had online classes for two years, they had difficulty socializing with other people when they returned to onsite classes:

*"the limited social interactions because we are studying with social distance" S2*

*"I'm adjusting to everybody to communicate well and for being socially oriented" S3*

*"It simply takes me a long time to warm up to people" S5*

### 3.3. Teachers' Coping Strategies on the Implementation of Progressive Opening of Onsite Classes

**Adjustment on Sleeping schedule.** Some participants shared that they had to adjust their sleeping schedule to cope with their challenges on resuming onsite classes. A participant disclosed that she went to bed early compared to her usual bed time, while another participant revealed that he had to wake up early since he had to travel a long distance to work:

*"Sleep early than the usual sleeping time." T1*

*"By waking up early, and by asking my superior not to give me early schedule." T4*

**Compromising with the Situation.** The participants collectively accepted the situation and compromised on certain things. One participant said that she embraced the situation and made the necessary adjustments. Another participant shared that he was following health protocols for his safety. Owing to his distance from school, another participant was considering renting an apartment, while yet another participant revealed that he made an extra effort whenever confronted with a problem to help manage the situation:

*"Embrace and be adjusted." T1*

*"I just followed the safety protocols besides it is also for my safety." T3*

*"I'm trying to solve it, maybe I got my apartment to solve my challenges." T4*

*"By assessing properly which problems require solution and what can we do about it in our end. Giving 'extra' will always be a part of teaching and doing just that manage to help in dealing problems." T5*

### 3.4. Students' Coping Strategies on the Implementation of Progressive Opening of Onsite Classes

**Adjusting Sleep Schedules.** In order to adjust to their challenges, students mentioned that they had to do something to cope with their sleeping schedule, like relaxing in the evening.

*"Adjusting my sleeping schedule isn't easy at first, but I can manage it now." S1*

*"For my sleeping schedule, I try to finish every task I have during the daytime so I get to relax and manage my stress at night. It helped me a lot to sleep better" S5*

**Earning extra money.** Since students mentioned that they had difficulty budgeting their allowance for their daily expenses. A few looked for other means of earning money. These includes tutoring and selling food:

*"For financial adjustments, I had to take the offer of my friends from other schools who are asking for help to tutor them on some subjects they're having a hard time on. I also alot my time in baking tarts and other pastry stuffs which are being sold by my parents. This way, I don't have to always ask them for money." S1*

*“When it comes to money, I am looking for a job to make money when I do not have class, such as catering, selling guavas, working as a construction laborer, or tutoring my niece.” S2*

**Positive Outlook.** Having a positive outlook helped students cope with their challenges on the progressive opening of onsite classes. When confronted with challenges, they motivated themselves and considered solutions instead of just becoming stressed:

*“I had to adapt with the situations. I thought of solutions that would help me manage my problems. If I can't adjust, then I know that I would be left behind. This kind of mindset helps me keep motivated sometimes.” S1*

*“I disciplined myself in all I do, which enabled me to overcome any obstacles I encountered.” S2*

*“in solving the challenges I just conditioning and thinking out of the box. ” S3*

*“I pushed myself to be persistent in order to actually solve these problems. Reminding myself of the goals I have to be motivated.” S5*

**Managing Time.** Time management also was mentioned as a coping strategy by the students. They calculated the time needed to do something:

*“The management of time will help us to carry on an hour in order for us to fix something and make it good” S3*

*“I managed one of the problems that I've encountered by time management. I calculated on what time I should wake up everyday and what time should I leave the house in order for me not to be late in attending the class.” S4*

### **3.5. Teachers' Opportunities on the Implementation of Progressive Opening of Onsite Classes**

**Self-Improvement.** The progressive opening of onsite classes led to self-improvement among the teachers. A participant disclosed that she improved her appearance; she needed to be physically presentable now that she was teaching in an onsite setting. Another participant reported that the progressive opening of onsite classes allowed him to improve his mental health because he had his colleagues and friends to talk to:

*“It improved my appearance/personality and need to be more presentable as compared to online classes where I would only wear less presentable clothing.” T1*

*“Improvement of my mental health because I have my co-teachers and friends to talked to.” T3*

**Face-to Face-Socialization.** Undeniably, face-to-face interactions, equivalent to socialization, was one of the benefits of the progressive opening of classes as reported by the participants. The participants collectively verbalized that onsite classes added social skills to learners and teachers:

*“Onsite classes also add social skills.” T1*

*“I was able to know that the students listen during discussion on our face to face class.” T2*

*“Socializing with my colleagues and students.” T3*

*“Enhance socialization on both side of the student and teacher because of the onsite classes.” T4*

**Monitoring Students' Performance.** Apparently, teachers could now physically monitor students by progressively opening onsite classes. This monitoring happened during face-to-face classes and especially during assessments:

*“I was able to monitor the performance of my students physically.” T2*

*“I can monitor my students physically.” T3*

*“Learnings that the students will receive from teachers who could now fully articulate the discussion using verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal language will be finer.” T5*

**Being More Productive and Less Distracted.** The participants shared that they were now less distracted since the start of onsite classes because they were no longer working at home. They could now communicate with their peers without technical problems. This led to their being more focused on their tasks:

*“I became more active.” T1*

*"I can focus on my task when I go to school physically because there are some distractions in WFH setting."* T2

*"I can communicate to them without technical problems."* T3

*"I was able to be more productive inside the class by giving group activities and laboratories face to face."* T5

### **3.6. Students' Opportunities on the Implementation of Progressive Opening of Onsite Classes**

**Less Distraction.** According to the students, there are fewer distractions at school compared to studying at home. Therefore, they can focus more on discussions:

*"One thing, is that there is lesser distraction. My only focus now is only about learning and accomplishing my tasks, when I am inside the university."* S1

*"I can concentrate better on my schoolwork at school than at home. Since there are undoubtedly many distractions at home as opposed to in school, just the lessons are my first priority."* S2

**Socialization.** The students mentioned that they were able to socialize with their classmates. They could now communicate with them more easily. They got to build friendships with their classmates:

*"we developed our social skills again."* S1

*"I will be able to participate more in our conversation. Of course, I can also personally connect with and converse with my friends and classmates."* S2

*"I am surrounded by people who are good at heart, ready to learn and willing grow together."* S3

*"we are able to get to know are classmates and friends more"* S4

**Monitoring Students.** The students acknowledge that teachers could now monitor them more effectively through onsite classes. Thus, they could receive the necessary attention and assistance:

*"For instructors, I think conducting face to face classes also helped them in classroom management."* S1

*"teacher can assist and monitor us when doing an activity and other school related stuffs."* S4

**Better Learning Experience.** The students reported that they had a better learning experience in the school premises. Some observed that students participate more readily in onsite class than in online class. They were able to improve their leadership skills and confidence as well:

*"The good things happened because of the progressive opening of onsite classes were chances to learn and mold in education"* S3

*"I've noticed is that some of our classmates that doesn't participate in online class tend to be more active in onsite classes."* S4

*"The benefits I gained from this progressive opening of onsite classes are improvement in my leadership skills and a slight confidence in my work and myself in general"* S5

## **4. Discussion**

Teachers' challenges in the progressive opening of onsite classes included transportation, time concerns, student concerns, and observing health protocols, while the student participants were challenged by their sleeping schedules, financial allowances, and social adjustments.

Likewise, as regards the challenges of the implementation of the reopening of onsite classes, James et al. (2022) articulated that in terms of preparedness to return to the face-to-face school setting, the primary concern of participants was about their health and safety, and the fear of being exposed to the COVID-19 virus at their schools. Teachers coped with their challenges by adjusting their sleeping schedules as they compromised with the situation. On the other hand, students also adjusted their sleeping schedules, looked for other sources for their financial allowance, and managed their time to cope with their challenges in the progressive opening of onsite classes. Teachers saw improvements in themselves as they were able to socialize physically again and

monitor their students' performances in their classes. The progressive opening of onsite classes allowed them to become more productive and less distracted in their teacher duties.

Students also noted that they were less distracted and could socialize with their classmates and teachers. They also saw the benefit of being monitored by their teachers as they could easily get answers to their questions and assistance whenever needed. Sevy-Biloon (2021) reported in his research that, in connection with the study's findings, 70% of students choose in-person instruction, while only 30% favour online learning. Students clarified that compared to studying online, they could focus more clearly and experience fewer interruptions when studying in a classroom. They added that they did not need to worry about technological issues or their Internet connection. They added that they had more opportunities to engage in genuine communication in English, such as impromptu talks with classmates and professors. Finally, students indicated that they were free to engage more readily with their classmates and to seek clarification from their teachers as needed.

Relative to the findings of this study, James et al. (2022) recommended that schools should implement proper safety measures, maintain regular communication with all stakeholders, and ensure social-emotional support to facilitate a successful return to the physical classrooms.

## 5. Conclusions

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be made:

The onsite programmes were opened progressively after considering cyclical shifting class schedules. Using this concept, the university's student population was divided into two groups. For the remaining nine (9) weeks, a modified cyclical shifting plan was developed that included extra face-to-face sessions for all programmes, covering all year levels. Teachers' challenges in the progressive opening of onsite classes included transportation, time concerns, student concerns, and observing health protocols. On the other hand, the student participants were challenged by their bed time schedules, financial allowances, and social adjustments. Teachers coped with their challenges by adjusting their bed time schedules, thereby compromising according to their situation. They saw improvements in themselves as they could physically socialize again and monitor their students' performances in their classes. The progressive opening of onsite classes allowed them to become more productive and less distracted in their duties as teachers. Students also noted that they were less distracted and could socialize with their classmates and teachers. They also saw the benefit of being monitored by their teachers as they could easily get answers to their questions and assistance whenever needed.

## Limitations and Recommendations

The study was delimited by a small sample size of participants. However, its findings can shed light on how a state university was progressively able to open its doors for onsite classes. The study recommends that other researchers conduct similar studies with other universities in the Philippines and other regions. It is also suggested that different data collection tools are used, such as observation, focused group discussions, and content analysis for another study perspective.

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