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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Learners' Essential Skills and Schools' Readiness towards Limited Face-to-face Classes

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| ABSTRACT

This research assessed the learners' essential skills and the schools' readiness towards limited face-to-face classes at Naga Central Elementary School and Greenhills Elementary School in Cebu for the school year 2021-2022. It used a descriptive quantitative design and a universal sampling technique to select the respondents. An adapted questionnaire was administered to kindergarten parents and teachers. Data were gathered using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, and T-test independent samples. The findings revealed that most parents were between the ages of 21 and 26, the majority were females, attained high school diplomas, had three to four primary school-aged children, and had a combined monthly income of Php 10,000 or less. Moreover, most of the teacher respondents were aged 29-34. Half had a bachelor's degree and had a length of service of less than 10 years. The results further indicate high confidence among parents and teachers regarding school readiness, with parents rating readiness as "very high" and teachers as "high." However, differences in perceptions led to rejecting the null hypothesis. Kindergarten learners' readiness was assessed based on essential skills in literacy, mathematics, and motor skills, with parents rating all skills as "very proficient" and teachers as "proficient." A significant difference was found in literacy skills, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis, while mathematical and motor skills did not show significant differences. Overall, positive feedback suggests satisfactory readiness levels, with suggestions for improvement, including using interactive digital learning materials and worksheets to enhance the learning experience.

| KEYWORDS

Early Childhood Education, Readiness, Literacy Skills, Questionnaires, Descriptive - Quantitative Design, Cebu Province

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant changes in the educational landscape, radically affecting the educational experience for almost one billion young people worldwide. The shutdown of schools and institutions at the height of the pandemic forced students to switch to distance learning, a difficult transition. Many people had difficulty generating a favorable home learning environment due to space constraints and lacking basic resources, which exacerbated the impact of distractions such as noise. To quickly adjust to the new learning environment, the educational system had to respond quickly to the abrupt, confusing, and unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 issue.

As a result of the pandemic, educational authorities worldwide established various learning methods to reduce the danger of COVID-19 transmission via face-to-face contact. These modalities included online learning, modular learning using printed materials, blended learning combining online and modular approaches, and radio-based and television-based learning. The availability of numerous modalities enabled learners to select options based on their preferences, but it also resulted in variances in the quality of their learning experiences. In response to network challenges, flexible learning became a feasible option, notably in Philippine higher educational institutions. As the COVID-19 situation improved, limited face-to-face lessons were reinstated in certain regions while rigorously observing health guidelines set by the Department of Health (DOH) to protect the safety of

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students, instructors, and staff. Learning settings were redesigned to follow social distance rules with reduced class numbers, dispersed seating configurations, and makeshift protective shields.

Despite the transition to online learning in 2020, concerns remain about the issues encountered during restricted face-to-face lessons at schools such as Naga Central Elementary School and Greenhills Elementary School. Issues such as difficulty communicating owing to face masks and shields, limited sight of board writings, time limits, a lack of essential learning resources, and parents dealing with their child's separation anxiety have emerged. These issues may impede the successful development and assessment of learners' critical abilities, particularly for those engaged in Modular Distance Learning. Recognizing the necessity of identifying the problems before finding answers, researchers requested permission to conduct a comprehensive survey of principals at Naga Central Elementary School and Greenhills Elementary School. The study examined learners' fundamental competencies and the schools' readiness for restricted face-to-face lessons during the school year 2021-2022.

2. Literature Review

This research is anchored on Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) Theory, Randy Garrison's Community of Inquiry Theory, and George Siemens' Connectivism. Additionally, it was supported with the legal bases in light of DepEd Memo No. 071, s.2021, known as the Preparations for the Pilot Face-To-Face and the DepEd-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular 001, s. 2021 Known as the Operational Guidelines on Implementing Limited Face-to-Face Learning Modality.

The first theory is the Zone of Proximal Development theory by Lev Vygotsky (1978), a psychologist. He emphasized the importance of the influence of each student's learning process in terms of their current learning situation and individual social and historical background. The researchers used this theory since it focuses on scaffolding learning development. Parents are significantly involved in the learners' learning process in distance learning. This will enable the researchers to find gaps or common grounds between distance and face-to-face learning. He defines his theory as the distance between the developmental level determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers(Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The ZPD's basic concept is that a teacher can improve a student's learning by guiding them through a task that is somewhat above their level of competency. As the student becomes more competent, the teacher stops assisting until the student can do the task himself. This process is called scaffolding. (Silalahi, 2019)

Another theory is the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, 2000). He is a Canadian professor at the University of Calgary who has published extensively on distance education. He developed the Community of Inquiry model, which was developed in 2001. The Community of Inquiry Model creates a deep and meaningful learning experience by developing three interdependent elements – social, cognitive, and teaching presence. Through this, learners conduct studies on exciting concepts and essential problems. Inquiry-based learning, questioning, critical thinking, and the creative generation of new knowledge are just as vital (if not more so) as research-based learning. Lastly, the theory of Connectivism by George Siemen (2001), a researcher, theorist, and educator. He describes connectivism as a relatively recent learning theory that proposes that learners link their ideas, theories, and general knowledge productively. It recognizes that technology is an important element of the learning process and that our constant connectivity allows us to decide about our education. More importantly, it encourages learning outside of the classroom, such as through social media, online networks, blogs, and information databases. (Quiaman, 2020)

The researchers were moved to conduct the study because of the DepEd Memorandum No. 71, s. 2021, which mandates and approves the joint proposal of DepEd and DOH for implementing face-to-face classes in limited schools nationwide. However, schools that intend to be a part of the pilot phase need to comply with the following conditions: located in minimal risk areas, secured LGU concurrence, passed the School Safety Assessment Tool (SSAT), and secured parent consent.

The DepEd and DOH Joint Memorandum No. 01 s. 2021 showcases the president's approval to finally conduct limited face-to-face classes. This memorandum is established to guide the safe implementation of these classes and to improve learning outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the joint memorandum No. 01 s. 2021 circular signed by the Secretaries of DepEd and DOH, schools selected for the pilot phase must meet DepEd and DOH requirements—they must be located in low-risk zones, have LGU approval, and obtain a Parental agreement after passing the School Safety Assessment Tool (SSAT). The schools must have guidelines to manage safe school operations. The guideline establishes standards for school reopening preparation. Before implementing the face-to-face classes, it uses the Prevent, Detect, Isolate, Treat, and Reintegrate framework, emphasizing the importance of having access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, proper ventilation in classrooms, ensuring that classroom layouts allow for physical separation between people, prioritization of learners who will benefit the most from limited face-to-face learning, management of foot traffic, and simulation activities.

The Department of Education also created a contingency plan with suggested actions for various circumstances. The circumstances range from a suspected case with symptoms to a comeback of COVID-19 cases in many barangays. This establishes when schools

should implement lockdown procedures. The Department of Education, Undersecretary Nepomuceno Malaluan, announced at the Laging Handa public briefing that there should be a pilot run of face-to-face classes for lower grade levels, including the kindergarten learners, noting that there will still be precautionary measures that will be implemented – only 12 kindergarten learners will be allowed per classroom which includes the guidelines of the DepEd. The protocols observed during the face-to-face classes are wearing appropriate face masks, frequent sanitation and handwashing, social distancing (at least one meter apart), markers in public spaces, no work if showing symptoms, and consultation with the Local Government Units.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), school reopening for face-to-face interactions must be carefully planned to ensure the safety of kindergarten learners, teachers, and school staff in a staged fashion, especially following physical distancing. The planning and execution of school health protocols during this pandemic must be supported by the truthful data given by various institutions. The existing COVID-19-related WHO guidelines are structured around protective measures related to 1) hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; 2) physical distancing; 3) use of masks in schools; 4) environmental cleaning and ventilation; 5) respecting procedures for isolation of all people with symptoms.' The checklist helps policymakers and school officials enhance compliance and adherence to public health protocols during the time of the pandemic.

On another note, there are three essential skills for kindergarten learners to recognize: literacy skills, mathematical skills, and motor skills. These essential skills help the teachers and parents to know what skills the kindergarten learners need to develop and how they are ready for the limited face-to-face classes. Helping kindergarten learners develop an extensive vocabulary, self-expression, and reading comprehension are all examples of literacy skills. Mathematics skills are important for kindergarten learners as they will assist them in developing their spatial awareness, solving problems, and comprehending shapes.

According to Ten Braak et al.(2022), working memory predicted the time-invariant covariation between first and seventh grades, and phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and counting predicted the covariation between reading and mathematics skills, which is already fairly well established at the start of school. One study looked at the role of mathematical language in the relationship between early mathematics and early literacy skills. It found that in preschool children, phonological awareness and definitional vocabulary were related to early mathematics ability in a way that was partially mediated by children's mathematical language skills, raising the possibility that mathematics may have served as a stand-in for mathematical language. (Turan & De Smedt, 2022)

The findings of this research highlight the significance of factoring early language and literacy abilities into early prediction models. On the other hand, motor skills are important for kindergarten learners to perform movements and tasks such as holding a pencil or demonstrating non-locomotor movements. Fine motor exercises could allow kindergarten learners to practice connecting concepts to visual representations. Strong motor skills could also compensate for lacking academic or behavioral skills. (Chandler et al., 2021) School is based on motor skills in at least two areas of readiness: classroom self-regulation and literacy and numeracy are examples of emergent academic talents. (Rojas et al., 2020)

It is important to assess these skills from kindergarten learners, especially since they are transitioning from distance learning to face-to-face. Although distant learning was developed thoroughly to compensate for the absence of physical attendance in the classroom, it is noticeable that there is a huge difference between them that would affect learning. This case is presented well according to the result of the comparative research conducted by Mathers and Sarkan (2018). Compared to distant learning, kindergarteners are only given reading materials as their primary source and less workload. The challenges included timely feedback and communication from the faculty.

In conclusion, these limited face-to-face classes should consider the kindergarten learners' essential skills and schools' readiness to implement them effectively. Reopening schools requires much preparation from schools, children, and parents; hence, the successful implementation of reopening the school depends on many factors, including the attainment of the kindergarten learners' essential skills, achieved through ZPD, connectivism, and community inquiry, and implemented requirements set by both DOH and DepEd.

3. Purpose of the Study

This research assessed the learners' essential skills and the schools' readiness towards limited face-to-face classes at Naga Central Elementary School and Greenhills Elementary School in Cebu for the school year 2021-2022. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions regarding the profile of the respondent groups, the level of the school's readiness toward limited face-to-face class implementation as perceived by the respondent groups; the level of the learners' essential skills as to literacy, mathematical skills, and motor skills; and the significant difference between the parents' and teachers' perceptions of the schools' readiness towards limited face-to-face classes implementation and learners' essential skills.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Design

This study used a descriptive quantitative design. It was descriptive because it aimed to describe the respondents' characteristics, identify the learners' essential skills, and assess the schools' readiness for limited face-to-face classes.

4.2 Respondents

The qualified respondents for this study were the parents and teachers of Greenhills Elementary School and Naga Central Elementary School. The researchers chose them because kindergarten learners were underage and protected by data privacy laws. Additionally, kindergarten parents and teachers were in charge of facilitating the kindergarten learners' learning progress.

4.3 Instrument

The major tool utilized in this study to collect data from the respondents is a survey questionnaire created by the researchers. The survey on limited face-to-face readiness by Saldariega (2019) and the student survey questions about COVID-19 by Mahmutovic (2020) inspired this questionnaire. There are separate sets of questionnaires for parents and teachers. There are parts, and each set has its parts. The first section focuses on the group profiling of the respondents. It collects information on their age and gender, highest educational attainment, number of children in elementary, combined family income, and length of teaching experience. Teachers and parents responded to this section by checking the space provided. The second part also focuses on the schools' readiness toward limited face-to-face classes, which collects data about the perceptions of respondents' groups. The third section focuses on the kindergarten learners' level of essential skills to gather data on literacy, mathematical skills, and motor skills. In parts two and three, the respondent groups' response question is answered using a Likert scale, which has four scales from strongly agree to disagree strongly. Strongly agree received a score of 4, while strongly disagree received a score of 1.

4.4 Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered were subjected to statistical calculation using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, and T-test Independent Samples. The Likert scale was used to provide a basis for the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

5.0 Results and Discussion

5.1 Profile of the Respondents

This section provides information about the respondents' age, gender, the highest level of education attained by their parents and teachers, monthly family income, number of elementary-aged children, and length of service of the teachers.

Table 1. Age and Gender of the Parent Respondents

Table 1
Age and Gender of the Parent-Respondents

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
45 and above	2	3.33	0	0.00	2	
37-44	15	25.00	3	5.00	18	
29-36	18	30.00	2	3.33	20	
21-28	13	21.67	1	1.67	14	
Failed to Respond	6	10.00	0	0.00	6	
Total	**54**	**90.00**	**6**	**10.00**	**60**	**100.00**

In Table 1, 90 percent of respondents were females (54 out of 60), while males constituted 10 percent. Female parents aged 45 and older were 3.33 percent, 25 percent were aged 37-44, 30 percent were aged 29-36, and 21.67 percent were aged 21-28. For males, 5 percent were aged 37-44, 2.3 percent were aged 29-36, and 1.67 percent were aged 21-28. Six female respondents did not answer.

Most respondents are female parents, who tend to be older than their male counterparts, mostly in early adulthood. This suggests a higher hands-on involvement of female parents in their children's education. Findings indicate that fathers and mothers contribute differently to male and female learners' academic performance, emphasizing the importance of parental involvement for success (PSA, 2021).

Table 2. Highest Educational Attainment of the Parent-Respondents

Table 2
Highest Educational Attainment of the Parent-Respondents

Educational Attainment	f	%
With Doctorate Units	1	1.67
Master's Graduate	4	6.67
With Master's Units	2	3.33
College Graduate	11	18.33
College Level	10	16.67
High School Graduate	23	38.33
High School Level	5	8.33
Elementary Graduate	1	1.67
Elementary Level	2	3.33
Failed to Respond	1	1.67
Total	**60**	**100.00**

In Table 2, out of 60 respondents, 1.67 percent had doctoral units, 6.67 percent had master's degrees, and 3.33 percent had master's units. Additionally, 18.33 percent had college degrees, 38.33 percent were high school graduates, 8.33 percent completed high school, 1.67 percent completed elementary school, and 3.33 percent were at the elementary level. One respondent did not reply.

Most parents are high school graduates, indicating incomplete degrees. Ribeiro et al. (2021) stated that factors like educational level and parental efforts may be compromised, affecting support for children's education. Ali and Kaur (2020) added that despite challenges, parents, amid the pandemic, ensure their children's right to education. However, they express hope for the temporary nature of distance learning. (Lase et al., 2022)

Table 3. Parents' Number of Children in Elementary

Table 3
Parent-Respondents' Number of Children in Elementary

Number of Children in Elementary	f	%
4 and above	8	13.33
3-4	22	36.67
1-2	18	30.00
Failed to Respond	12	20.00
Total	**60**	**100.00**

As presented in Table 3, eight parents, or 13.33 children, had four or more elementary-aged children, whereas 22 parents, or 36.67 children, had three to four children. In addition, 12 or 20 percent of the respondents with one or two children did not respond.

Most of the data showed that there were 3–4 kids in elementary school, suggesting that the families of these participants were typical. According to the study, the nation's average household size (AHS) declined from 4.4 persons in 2015 to 4.1 persons in 2020. There were 4.6 people on average per family in 2010. (PSA, 2022).

Table 4. Combined Family Monthly Income of the Parent Respondents

Table 4
Parent-Respondents' Combined Family Monthly Income

Monthly Income (in pesos)	f	%
Above 30,000	1	1.67
25,001-30,000	6	10.00
20,001-25,000	1	1.67
15,001-20,000	8	13.33
10,001-15,000	11	18.33
10,000 and below	24	40.00
Failed to Respond	9	15.00
Total	**60**	**100.00**

As presented in Table 4, the highest percentage of parent responses, 24 or 40 percent, had a monthly income of Php 10,000 or less. With a combined household income above Php 30,000 and between Php 20,001 and 25,000, two monthly earnings had the lowest frequency of one, or 1.67 percent.

This data suggests that most parents of students at Naga Central Elementary School make a low income, which suggests that most parents earn an inadequate salary. Nevertheless, despite having a limited budget, they can send their children to school. The Career Explorer Guide (2022) shows that salaries in the Philippines can range from 11,000 PHP to 200,000 PHP monthly. In this bracket, the lowest monthly compensation is 11,300 PHP, and the highest monthly salary is 199,000 PHP. The average monthly wage in the Philippines is roughly 45,000 PHP, yet this is not always the case. However, the pay might undoubtedly vary depending on the profession.

Table 5. Age and Gender of the Teacher-Respondents

Table 5
Age and Gender of the Teacher-Respondents

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
41 and above	1	10.00	0	0.00	1	10.00
35-40	4	40.00	0	0.00	4	40.00
29-34	5	50.00	0	0.00	5	50.00
Total	**10**	**100.00**	**0**	**0.00**	**10**	**100.00**

Table 5 reveals that the maximum frequency of teacher-respondents was five or 50 percent of those aged 29 to 34, while the lowest frequency was one or 10 percent of those aged 35 to 40. As a result, the teachers' ages ranged from 29 to 34. Based on the data, most of the teachers at Naga Central Elementary School were in their early 20s, which suggests that they are still relatively youthful and have some flexibility in a rapidly changing world; they are also called emergent adults. People just entering adulthood exhibit each of these qualities to varying degrees. Emerging adults experience emotions of instability as they have one metaphorical foot in adolescence and the other in adulthood. Emerging adults are looking into different options for relationships and employment. Additionally, compared to any other stage of life, the rate of residence changes among emerging adults is substantially higher. (Germani et al., 2020)

Table 6. Highest Educational Attainment of the Teacher Respondents

Table 6
Teacher-Respondents' Highest Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	f	%
Master's Graduate	1	10.00
With Master's Units	4	40.00
Bachelor's Degree	5	50.00
Total	**10**	**100.00**

As presented in Table 6, a bachelor's degree was indicated by the highest frequency, five or 50 percent, while a master's degree was indicated by the lowest frequency, one or 10 percent. Most teachers at both schools did not hold a Master's degree. However, research from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2021) indicates an increasing trend in postbaccalaureate degrees among public school teachers. In 2017–18, 58 percent of teachers had postbaccalaureate degrees, compared to 47 percent in 1999–2000. This pattern is observed in both primary and secondary education, with higher percentages in 2017–2018 (55% for elementary and 61% for secondary) compared to 1999–2000 (45% for elementary and 50% for secondary). Secondary school teachers were more likely to have post-baccalaureate degrees in both academic years.

Table 7
Length of Service of Teacher-Respondents

Length of Service (in years)	f	%
9 and above	4	40.00
5-8	3	30.00
1-4	3	30.00
Total	**10**	**100.00**

Table 7. Length of Service of Teacher Respondents

In Table 7, the highest frequency was four, or 40 percent of the years spanning from 9 years and above, and the lowest frequency was three, or 30 percent, with teachers' service lengths spanning from 5 to 8 years and 1 to 4 years, respectively.

The research demonstrated that most teachers had been in the profession for longer and are qualified to instruct those learners due to how their years of classroom practice have evolved. Throughout a teacher's career, teaching experience is positively correlated with increases in student achievement. Gains in teacher efficacy linked to experience are most significant during the first few years of teaching, but they continue to be significant as teachers enter their second and, frequently, third decades of service (Podolsky et al., 2019).

5.2 Level of The Schools' Readiness Towards Limited Face-To-Face Classes Implementation

Table 8. Level of the School's Readiness towards Limited Face-to-face Classes Implementation as Perceived by the Parents

Table 8
Level of the School's Readiness towards Limited Face-to-face Classes Implementation as Perceived by the Parents

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	The school has sufficient measures to respond to the coronavirus crisis.	3.27	Very High
2	The school has set up proper sanitation and hygiene for the learners.	3.33	Very High
3	The school has ensured a sufficient supply of learning resources needed for the face-face classes, like textbooks and self-learning modules	3.27	Very High
4	The teacher evaluates the progress of the school's readiness for face-to-face classes and gives recommendations.	3.35	Very High
5	The teacher systematically searches to identify and prioritize problems as well as strategies to assist learners during face-to-face classes.	3.23	High

6	The school provides separate textbooks, chalkboards, etc. to each classroom to avoid borrowing instructional materials for safety purposes.	3.27	Very High
7	The school has designed class program/s to cater to learners of the limited face-face classes arrangement.	3.30	Very High
8	The school provides markers and stickers on the floor to manage the traffic system and physical distancing inside the classroom.	3.38	Very High
9	The school has ensured an adequate supply of alcohol and face masks for learners.	3.23	High
10	The school has comprehensively profiled learners who will participate in the implementation of the face-to-face classes.	3.32	Very High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.30**	**Very High**

Legend: 3.25-4.00- Very High; 2.50– 3.24- High ;1.75 – 2.49-Low ; 1.00 – 1.74–Very Low

Table 8 summarizes parental assessments of the school's readiness for face-to-face instruction. The highest-rated aspects include implementing markers for traffic flow (3.38, "Very High") and teachers analyzing progress (3.35, "Very High"). Other aspects like sanitation, learner profiling, class program adaptation, and resource provision all received "Very High" ratings. However, teacher strategies and the supply of alcohol and face masks scored slightly lower with a mean of 3.23, interpreted as "High."

Data from both schools indicates a high outcome, suggesting positive parental views on the schools' readiness for face-to-face classes. Parental satisfaction is crucial for assessing a school's quality, as they are significant users and partners. The quick adaptation to social changes without extensive planning can be inferred from parent satisfaction. Studies by Zhan et al. (2021) and Qazi et al. (2020) reveal a strong willingness among parents for their children to return to school, emphasizing a consistent trend.

Table 9. Level of The Schools' Readiness Towards Limited Face-To-Face Classes Implementation as Perceived by the Teachers

Table 9
Level of the School's Readiness towards Limited Face-to-face
Classes Implementation as perceived by the Teachers

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	The school has sufficient measures to respond to the coronavirus crisis.	3.20	High
2	The school has set-up proper sanitation and hygiene for the learners.	3.20	High
3	The school has ensured a sufficient supply of learning resources needed for the face-face classes, like textbooks and self-learning modules	2.70	High
4	The teacher evaluates progress of the school's readiness for face-to-face classes and gives recommendations.	2.70	High
5	The teacher systematically searches to identify and prioritize problems as well as strategies to assist learners during face-to-face classes.	2.90	High
6	The school provides separate textbooks, chalkboard etc. to each classroom to avoid borrowing of instructional materials for the safety purposes.	3.00	High
7	The school has designed class program/s to cater to learners of the limited face-face classes arrangement.	3.00	High
8	The school provides markers and stickers on the floor to manage traffic system and physical distancing inside the classroom.	3.00	High
9	The school has ensured an adequate supply of alcohol and face masks for learners.	3.00	High
10	The school has comprehensively profiled learners who will participate in the implementation of the face-to-face classes.	3.00	High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**2.97**	**High**

Table 9 reveals teachers' perceptions of the school's readiness for face-to-face classes. The questions on measures for the coronavirus crisis and sanitation scored the highest means of 3.20, classified as High. Five questions, including class program design, marker provision, and learner profiling, received a High rating with a mean score of 3.00. Additionally, the question on teachers systematically addressing problems during face-to-face classes scored 2.90, also interpreted as High. The two questions

with the lowest mean of 2.70, still rated as High, addressed the supply of learning resources and teacher evaluation of readiness progress.

The data from both schools showed a strong performance. Given that teachers contributed to the school's preparation for limited face-to-face classes, teachers had a favorable opinion of the school's preparedness level. This implies that both schools are equipped with the knowledge to continue the limited face-to-face classes. According to the report, DepEd reports that participating public schools in the pilot face-to-face classes are more than 90% prepared (Manila Bulletin, 2021).

5.4 Level of the Learners' Essential Skills

Table 10. Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as to Literacy as Perceived by the Parents

Table 10
Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as to Literacy as Perceived by the Parents

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Recognizes letters in his or her own first name	3.38	Very High
2	Begins to write some of the letters in his or her own first name	3.38	Very High
3	Recognizes and names at least 10 letters of the alphabet	3.42	Very High
4	Start to connect letter sounds to letters (like the sound of the first letter in their name)	3.27	Very High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.36**	**Very High**

Legend: 3.25-4.00- Very Proficient; 2.50– 3.24-Proficient ;1.75 – 2.49-Less Proficient ; 1.00 – 1.74–Not Proficient

Table 10 presents parents' responses on learners' literacy skills. The overall weighted mean of 3.36 indicates very high skills. The top indicator, recognizing and naming 10 alphabet letters, scored the highest, with a mean of 3.38. Following closely, indicators 1 and 2, involving recognizing and writing letters in their first names, also scored 3.38. The fourth indicator, connecting letter sounds to letters, received a mean of 3.27.

Parents significantly impact their child's learning growth through activities like participating in reading at home. This engagement enhances language, reading, and comprehension skills, improving concentration, attitude, and interest. Regular discussions, home language use, and reading contribute to vocabulary expansion and school connections. This fosters interest and eagerness to learn in the classroom. Opportunities for native language acquisition support English literacy instruction (Reade, 2017).

Table 11. Level of The Learners' Essentials as To Literacy as Perceived by The Teachers

Table 11
Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as to Literacy as perceived by the Teachers

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Recognizes letters in his or her own first name	3.20	High
2	Begins to write some of the letters in his or her own first name	3.00	High
3	Recognizes and names at least 10 letters of the alphabet	3.00	High
4	Start to connect letter sounds to letters (like the sound of the first letter in their name)	3.10	High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.08**	**High**

As reflected in Table 11, the aggregate weighted mean for the teachers' responses regarding the learners' essential skills is 3.08, which is high. The ability of the learners to recognize the letters in their first names comes the highest, at a rate of 3.20. With a weighted mean of 3.10, the ability of the learners to connect letter sounds is also evidently high. Indicators 2 and 3 have the same weighted mean of 3.00, implying that learners can write some letters of their first names and recognize them.

According to Venketsamy et al. (2021), reading for purpose and enjoyment is one of the most crucial skills children develop in elementary school. A lack of foundational skills significantly contributes to low performance in challenging literacy skills among

EFAL students. In teaching literacy, teachers provide a place for learner-generated ideas through oral and written text, allowing EFAL learners to weave their experiences, feelings, and interests into literacy development.

Table 12. Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as to Mathematical Skills as Perceived by the Parents

Table 12
Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as to Mathematical Skills as perceived by the Parents

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Counts out loud from 1 to 10 in the correct order	3.42	Very High
2	Identifies written numbers from one to ten	3.35	Very High
3	Recognizes and names 4 shapes: circle, square, rectangle, and triangle	3.37	Very High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.38**	**Very High**

As shown in Table 12, the aggregate weighted mean of the parents' perception of the learners' mathematical skills is 3.38, which is very high. The learners' ability to count out loud numbers from 1 to 10 in the correct order resulted in a 3.42 weighted mean, which serves as the highest among indicators. The recognition and ability to name the basic shapes are also very high, with a 3.37 weighted mean. A 3.35 weight indicates that the ability of the learners to write numbers from one to ten is also very high.

Generally, parents put effort into developing their children's mathematical skills at home. With the introduction of songs and rhymes that feature numbers that count forward, it is possible to support children's mathematical development from an early age. The value of counting helps children learn to count and comprehend the number system and its value, which they will need throughout their lives. It is a child's first experience with numbers and math (Daisy, 2021).

Table 13. Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as To Mathematical Skills as Perceived by the Teachers

Table 13
Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as to Mathematical Skills as Perceived by the Teachers

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Counts out loud from 1 to 10 in correct order	3.10	High
2	Identifies written numbers from one to ten	3.00	High
3	Recognizes and names 4 shapes: circle, square, rectangle and triangle	3.00	High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.03**	**High**

With a verbal description of high, the level of the learners' mathematical skills as perceived by the kindergarten teachers garnered 3.03 aggregate weighted mean. Indicator 1 with a 3.10 weighted mean reflects how the kindergarten teachers are confident that the learners can count out loud from 1 to 10 in correct order. Indicators 2 and 3 with 3.00 weighted mean also shows the kindergarten learners can identify numbers one to ten as well as recognize the basic shapes.

It is essential to acquire a solid mathematical foundation early in life. Early mathematics understanding in children is heavily related to their later academic success. As a result, it significantly affects how well young people do in school and how their lives turn out (Clark et al., 2020).

Table 14. Level of The Learners' Essential Skills as To Motor Skills as Perceived by the Parents

Table 15
Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as to Motor Skills as perceived by the Parents

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Holds and uses pencils, crayons, or markers using a three finger grasp.	3.38	Very High
2	Demonstrates non-locomotors movements such as bending, stretching, pulling, and pushing.	3.35	Very High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.37**	**Very High**

With the aggregate weighted mean of 3.37, the parents perceive that the learners' motor skills are very high, as it garnered an aggregate weighted mean of 3.37. Specifically, the indicator that the learners can hold and use pencils, crayons, or markers using a three-finger grasp scored a weighted mean of 3.38. In contrast, the indicator that the learners can demonstrate non-locomotor movements scored a 3.35 weighted mean. Both are interpreted as having a "very high" level of skills.

Our motor skills make our daily motions and duties possible. These abilities must be acquired in order for children to develop. Children's motions for playing, feeding themselves, and getting about are made possible by their motor abilities (Mauro, 2022). Parents who are confident in their responses that resulted in very high results can only imply that they are their children's pillars of support. This will encourage the children to take an interest in various activities and pave the path for developing motor skills.

Table 15. Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as To Motor Skills as Perceived by the Teachers

Table 15
Level of the Learners' Essential Skills as to Motor Skills as Perceived by the Teachers

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Holds and uses pencils, crayons, or markers using a three finger grasp.	3.10	High
2	Demonstrates non-locomotors movements such as bending, stretching, pulling, and pushing.	3.10	High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.10**	**High**

In contrast to the parents' perception of their motor skills as "very High," the teachers evaluate them as only "high." All indicators and the aggregated mean scored 3.10. Still, these indicators yield a positive response.

The bodily experiences that learners have are crucial for their development. These experiences, particularly in the earliest years of life, are acquired through the social-emotional and motor development infrastructure and cognitive growth. Motor skills are crucial for each of these areas of an individual's lifelong development. (Demir et al., 2020)

Table 16. Summary of the Level of the Learners' Essential Skills

Table 16
Summary on the Level of the Learners' Essential Skills

Components	Parents		Teachers	
	WM	Verbal Description	WM	Verbal Description
Literacy	3.36	Very High	3.08	High
Mathematical Skills	3.38	Very High	3.03	High
Motor Skills	3.37	Very High	3.10	High
Grand Mean	**3.37**	**Very High**	**3.07**	**High**

Table 16 gives a general view of how parents and teachers perceive the learners' skills.

Similar to each other, parents and teachers regard all of the skills highly. In contrast, parents evaluate all of the skills as "very high," while teachers evaluate only "high."

Communication includes literacy and numeracy, which are essential for early grades and beyond learning. Expanding their communication through oral language enables learners to begin expressing their emotions and establishing relationships with others (Ayade et al., 2019). The importance of motor skills, including children's postural, locomotor, and manual movements, as well as their exploration, social interactions, and interactions with objects. Or, to put it another way, all behavior is motor behavior, making motor skills equivalent to the development of conduct (Adolph et al., 2020).

5.5 Test of the Significance of the Difference Between the Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Schools' Readiness Towards Limited Face-To-Face Classes Implementation

Table 17
Test of Difference between the Parents and Teachers' Perception of the Schools' Readiness towards Limited Face-to-face Classes Implementation

Source of Difference	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	Computed t- value	p-value	Decision	Result
Parents	32.95	3.82	3.25	2.552*	0.013	Reject Ho	Significant
Teachers	29.70	3.09					

*significant at p<0.05

Based on the data presented in Table 17, the mean for kindergarten teachers is 29.70 with a standard deviation of 3.09 while the mean for kindergarten parents is 32.95 with a standard deviation of 3.82. A mean difference of 3.25 is the outcome. The p-value is 0.013 and the estimated t-value is 2.552. The survey's finding from the variation in respondents' results is significant because the p-value is less than 0.05.

Face-to-face (FTF) learning must be used in COVID-19 because numerous recent studies have found that online learning is unproductive. Early childhood education also requires extensive planning on the part of schools, students, and parents. Both parents and instructors fairly assessed the schools' preparation as high or very high, given the DepEd and DOH procedures and standards for face-to-face education in the Philippines.

5.6 Test of the Significance of the Difference Between the Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of the Learners' Essential Skills

Table 18
Test of Difference between the Teachers and Parents' Perception on the Learners' Essential Skills

Variables	Source of Difference	Mean	SD	Mean Diff.	Comp. t- value	p-value	Decision	Result
Literacy	Parents	13.45	1.80	1.15	2.650*	0.017	Reject Ho	S
	Teachers	12.30	1.16					
Mathematical Skills	Parents	10.13	1.40	1.03	3.505*	0.002	Reject Ho	S
	Teachers	9.10	0.74					
Motor Skills	Parents	6.73	0.90	0.53	2.306*	0.035	Reject Ho	S
	Teachers	6.20	0.63					

*significant at p<0.05; NS = Not Significant; S = Significant

In literacy, parents scored a mean of 13.45 and teachers 12.30, with a significant difference of 1.15 (p-value = 0.017). For Mathematics, parents scored 10.13 and teachers 9.10, with a significant difference of 1.15 (p-value = 0.002). In Motor skills, parents scored 6.73 and teachers 6.20, with a significant difference of 0.53 (p-value = 0.035). All essential skills have significant differences ($p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for literacy ($p = 0.17$), mathematics ($p = 0.002$), and motor skills ($p = 0.035$).

Studies suggest that when parents and instructors cooperate, children's work habits, attitudes toward learning, and academic performance all rise. Additionally, parents and teachers benefit. It has been discovered that when parents and teachers collaborate as partners, they can communicate more effectively, build deeper bonds, and learn how to assist children in their learning and behavior. (Leenders et al., 2019)

6. Findings

Based on the gathered data, the following are the study findings. Most parents who responded to the survey were between the ages of 21 and 36. The gender of these parents is female (87.27%), and the majority had attained a high school diploma (38.33%). Three to four primary school-age children make up the majority of households (36.67%), while the most prominent income band

(40%) has a combined monthly income of P10,000 or less. Moreover, the majority of the teacher respondents (50%) were in the 29–34 age range, and half had bachelor's degrees (50%). The service length is 1-4 years in Greenhills Elementary School (60%) and 5-8 years in Naga Central Elementary School (60%).

On the level of the school's readiness toward limited face-to-face classes implementation, with a weighted average of 3.30 overall, parents said the school was "Very High" prepared for a small number of in-person lessons. Conversely, teachers gave the school's preparedness a mean score of 2.97, or "High." On the level of the learners' essential skills, teachers gave all three skill areas a "High" rating, while parents gave them all a "Very High" rating. Regarding these crucial abilities, there was also a statistically significant difference in the judgments of parents and teachers. On the test of significant difference between the parents' and teachers' perceptions of the school's readiness toward limited face-to-face classes implementation, there is a significant difference with a mean difference of 3.25. There is also a difference in their perception of all the learners' essential skills.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Although they have varying degrees of confidence, parents and teachers agree that the kindergarten learners are ready for the limited face-to-face classes. Parents are quite optimistic about the learners' fundamental skills and the readiness of the school, while instructors provide a more nuanced, although nonetheless optimistic, evaluation. The general consensus is that limited in-person instruction is ready, but improving preparedness tactics and fostering learners' skill development must go on. A smooth transition to face-to-face classes will require constant dialogue and cooperation between parents and educators.

In light of the study's findings, it is recommended that the action plan be implemented for both schools with digital interactive learning materials and worksheets. These resources aim to improve learning environment dynamics and increase student engagement. Teachers can provide students with individualized learning experiences that meet their unique requirements by integrating technology into the curriculum. Moreover, the utilization of interactive materials can improve knowledge retention and comprehension, improving the efficiency and enjoyment of the learning process.

8. Study Limitations and Future Research

This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in Kindergarten classes. The respondents of the study were from two identified public schools. Private schools and public schools may implement limited face-to-face classes differently, which leads to variations of experiences that are difficult to account for comprehensively in this study.

Future research could explore how different technological tools and platforms impact learners' engagement and skill development. Likewise, it could compare the effectiveness of limited face-to-face classes with other forms of blended or online learning to determine the most effective approaches for different contexts and subjects.

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