CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AMIDST NEW NORMAL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and insights of the 10 school principals/school heads who are the school administrators in Maragusan National High School, Mapawa National High School, Bagong Silang National High School, Magcagong National High School, Tupaz National High School, Bagong Silang Elementary School, New Katipunan Elementary School, Mauswagon Elementary School, Maragusan Central Elementary School, and New Albay Elementary School for the school year 2023-2024. This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design. This research design allows the researcher to understand the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and insights of the participants of the study through conducting one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. According to the report, principals had a tough time adjusting their pedagogies, running their schools, providing assistance to both teachers and students during the crisis. Despite these difficulties, a number of principals showed incredible fortitude by coming up with creative ways to uphold academic standards and promote a feeling of normalcy in their schools. The data revealed several important themes, such as the value of adaptability, the necessity of effective communication, and the function of collaborative leadership during times of crisis. The study also emphasizes the psychological toll that principals bear from juggling their personal and professional obligations. These findings provide insights into how educational leaders might better prepare for future disruptions and deepen our understanding of the crucial role school principals play in crisis management. Significant changes have occurred in educational leadership, as evidenced by research on the difficulties and experiences faced by school principals in the face of the new normal. School principals' courage, flexibility, and creativity have been put to the test during this time, demonstrating the need for changes in educational administration as well as the need of enduring ideals. This study highlights the need for school principals to receive continual professional development and support, especially during times of crisis. It also offers policy and practice recommendations meant to increase educational institutions' ability to withstand future setbacks.

Keyword: *Elementary Education, lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, insights and phenomenological research*

1. INTRODUCTION

School leaders should make quick and sound decisions in setting up requirements needed to facilitate flexible learning without sacrificing the future of the teachers as well as the students. In the midst of the crises at this time of the pandemic, school leaders are able to make possible solutions to happen even if the situation is worse. According to Coelli and Green (2012), a new normal leader is a good leader who learns to do the routine things well, and is not afraid to act even when criticized and does not afraid to take on the impossible. The schools are experiencing tough times with even tougher demands for accountability among the leadership of the principals with limited financial resources which brought them more challenging in managing their school. Solving this dilemma calls for working together in a collaborative manner to develop cost-effective solutions. With the new normal now being the standard, it is critical that school leadership becomes connective in nature rather than practiced in an educational vacuum

A study was conducted in Turkey by Sal et al. (2021) that revealed the qualities that a leader should have in the new normal which are categorized under four themes: "technological, transformational, agile, and human-centered management." To that end, thirty-eight leadership qualities are needed to adjust to the new normal. In this context, a leader's technological competence, foresight, openness to innovation, and communication skills come to the forefront. In addition, today's leaders should form a culture of learning in the digital age, take initiatives when required, and lead developments with collaboration and reflection.

The study of Cahapay (2022) in General Santos City, Philippines revealed that there is a rareness of knowledge on the lived experiences of school principals amid the current global emergency. His paper underscores six emerging themes of educational leadership practices during a crisis. The experience of educational leadership can be understood as: 1.) navigating the crisis with adaptive leadership; 2.) cultivating practices in crisis management; 3.) managing through the machine; 4.) freezing the standards and patterns; 5.) promoting inclusivity in the new normal; and 6.) caring first for what is essential. These themes serve as the basis of the description and structure of the phenomenon of leading education amid the new normal.

In the Maragusan District, school principals face stress and burnout as they navigate the new normal in the educational system in the face of pandemics and its effects. As observed, the biggest problem they faced is the decreases in the motivation of some teachers in on-line teaching since majority of the students do not have the necessary computers and internet facilities to continue their education. And above all the financial crises experienced by the school principal is very much felt. The school MOOE is not enough to sustain the needs of the schools in producing modules and other related printed materials to support the learning of the students. The "new normal" conditions brought about by numerous worldwide events, including as the COVID-19 pandemic, technological breakthroughs, and changes in educational policies and societal demands, have resulted in a substantial evolution in the function of school principals.

Thus, the present study aims to explore the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of school principals in managing their schools in this new normal. School principals need to be more flexible, creative, and proactive than ever in the new normal. They have to strike a balance between the long-term objectives of educational equity and excellence and the urgent necessities of health and safety. Principals have a critical role in creating resilient and future-ready learning environments by tackling these complex issues.

1.1 Research Questions

The school principals were experiencing different challenges in this time of the pandemic. With this situation, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the school principals in managing their schools in the new normal?
2. What are the challenges faced by the school principals in teaching-learning process in the new normal?
3. How do school principals cope with the challenges they encountered?
4. What are the insights gained by the school principals in managing their schools?

2.1 Research Design

The phenomenological research method was used in this study wherein qualitative data are utilized in form of narrations. An in depth interview was used to gather vital information from the participants to explore their insights about their lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms as they selflessly fulfill their duty as administrative officers assigned in school. The method was phenomenological since it aimed to describe their lived experiences. The purpose of this design is to describe the lived experiences of the participants about a phenomenon. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences of the participants who had all experienced the phenomenon. This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009). Further, this design allowed the researcher to dig into the relevant experiences, understandings, and unexpressed feelings of school principals who had actually experienced the situation.

2.2 Role of the Researcher

　　　The researcher employed different research processes before, during and after the conduct of the study. As a proper protocol, the researcher followed the seven roles suggested by Fink (2000) that include thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting. As applied in this study, thematizing was done to provide a solution to the questions of what was studied, why this study was studied and how it was studied. The process in which the methodological procedure was conceived and prepared was known as the design stage. The individuals who served as participants were selected based on the criterion sampling method.

　　　In-depth interview was done to the selected participants of the study. The researcher organized the interview using the researcher-made interview guide that described themes covered during the interview. The interview guide reflected the specific questions in each of the major research questions. These specific questions would facilitate the discussion so as to get more details and varied responses from the participants. These would also use to encourage participants to provide lengthy, in-depth responses. Tape or video recordings of interviews were made. During the videotaping the interview, visual elements of the participants were also captured. Transcription of recordings was the next phase in the research process. The researcher was very careful in the transcription so as to get all information needed in the study.

　　　In analyzing, the researcher identified and classified all the data applying the coding system. After coding the data, the researcher moved on to the stage of analysis where the codes were combined into a single overall analysis. The analysis showed how the codes were interconnected. The researcher established the logic and coherence of the every response.

　　　Verification of the data analysis focused on the findings' generalizability, dependability, and validity. Generalizability was the ability to generalize results, reliability was the consistency of the findings, and validity was the ability to determine whether the study investigated the original question. In reporting, the researcher composed a report to summarize the findings.

　　　Following the established norms and guidelines, the researcher conducted IDI with the five school leaders from Maragusan District. The researcher herself conducted the interview. To get rich data, she allowed the participants to share their thoughts. The participants gave their agreement after being informed of the researcher's purpose and goals and receiving guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity, and sensitivity.

2.3 Research Participants

　　　The participants of the study comprised of 10 school leaders from public elementary and secondary schools in Maragusan district namely: Maragusan National High School, Mapawa National High School, Bagong Silang National High School, Magcagong National High School, Tupaz National High School, Bagong Silang Elementary School, New Katipunan elementary School, Mauswagon Elementary School, Maragusan Central Elementary School, and New Albay Elementary School during the school year 2023-2024. The participants were selected through criterion sampling method which followed that each participant was a school leader for more than two years and more. Using the In-depth interview (IDI) essential information was generated from the participants.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

An endorsement letter from the Dean of the Graduate School was given to the Division Office to allow the researcher to conduct such study. To proceed to the next step, ethics certificate was secured from the Office of the Research Development Center of the Asumption College of Nabunturan. After which a letter was requested for the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao De Oro under the Department of Education (DepEd). Upon the Superintendent's approval, the respective public school principals received a request letter together with the superintendent's approval to conduct the data gathering. The IDI with the school principals will be done through face to face and proper health protocols were observed as required by the local government unit. For the smooth flow of the IDI, the following procedures were carefully followed: The participants were oriented about the study and informed them that participation was voluntary. They were given a choice if they would like to be part of the study or not. The sound-recording consent form was also presented to them, which asked for their permission for the interviews to be recorded. The researcher explained to them that the data were treated with utmost confidentiality. The participants were interviewed individually in a private and quiet room which was free from any disturbances.   The audio recorder was used during each interview. Making use of an audio recorder allowed the researcher to record fully and accurately what was being shared by the participants. In many conditions, it was significant to establish a connection between the researcher and the participants. The rapport-building can be struggling amidst the pandemic. Following the initial stages, the participants were encouraged to raise any clarification, concerns, and unclear questions due to the technical interruption that may arise. After the interviews the data was encoded, transcribed and with the

help of the data analyst, the data were thematized, analyzed, interpreted, explained and drew conclusions. A thorough transcription and analysis were conducted after the interview. The interview transcription included the exact verbatim of each participant to avoid uncertainties of the data collection contents.

2.5 Data Analysis

The goal of qualitative work was not to generalize across a population rather it sought to provide a clear understanding from the perspectives of the participants. Insights on the lived experiences of the school administrators, their challenges, coping mechanisms and insights were taken. This provided clarification, understanding, and explanation but did not generate a conclusion. This study uncovered the experiences of school principals in managing their own schools.

Steps were taken: First, each transcription was read and re-read to obtain the general sense of the whole context. Second, important parts in each transcript from the statements were extracted. Significant statements were recorded on a separate sheet with the proper line, numbers, and pages. Third, significant statements formulated meanings and were sorted into categories and themes. The code and theme procedures were used in analyzing and interpreting the narratives of the participants.

3. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and insights of the school principals in the context of the new normal, as revealed by the data acquired during the in-depth interview (IDI).

After conducting a content analysis on the responses, the themes that appeared in each response were identified. The research participants' identities were concealed through the use of codes, in accordance with the ethical guidelines for qualitative research. Presentation of the findings was done in accordance with the particular research questions that were employed in this study.

1.1 How would you describe your role as a principal in the new normal?

Description of Role as Principal in the New Normal

The responses generated eight themes: Challenging and Rewarding, Expansive Responsibility, Taking on a Crucial Role, Taking on the Same Role, Role Evolving to Adapt to Changes, Taking on the Lead Role, Role of an Instructional Leader, Being Adaptable and Taking on administrative role .

Challenging and Rewarding. Informant 1 stressed out that it is a challenging but rewarding that needs a lot of work but ends up being worthwhile. Sa geingon basta passion jud nato ang usa ka work maningkamot jud ta for the learners and the school's welfare. (It is challenging but rewarding that needs a lot of work but ends up being worthwhile. As long as we have a passion for a job, we will work hard for the learners and the school's welfare.)

Expansive Responsibility. Informant 2 narrated that as a principal in the new normal my role has expanded significantly. I have had to take on additional responsibilities such as coordinating the implementation of the distant learning or hybrid models, ensuring the availability of necessary technological resources, and providing professional development and support to teachers to help them adapt to the new teaching and learning methods. So, during the new normal as a school principal, I have so many additional responsibilities aside from the normal work that I have, more particularly in the implementation of distant learning, because children at home do not have the technology such as cellphone, they do not have loads, so we shift on blended learning modalities such as the modular classes, using the modules.

Taking on a Crucial Role. Informant 3 had to say, very crucial in a way you are the one to lead particularly in the new normal. Principals have a complex and vital role in the new normal education environment, adjusting to the extraordinary shifts brought about by the worldwide pandemic. Kami na mga school head or our responsibilities extend beyond traditional administrative duties kumbaga mas ning dako amoang trabahuon, encompassing a broader range of functions to ensure effective learning and well-being within their schools. It calls on us to be multifaceted, resilient, and strong leaders who understand digital technology and are committed to fostering holistic learners' development in a fast changing learning world.

Taking on the Same Role. Informant 4 confirmed by saying that well, as a principal during this new normal my role is still the same as usual that I have but I am the school manager I am still the father of the teacher the father

of the students and guidance counselor of the parents and all stakeholders that are inside the school so my one of my rules is us a leader I have to obey and implement what is given in the order and again still I have to look out everything in the schools.

Role Evolving to Adapt to Changes. Informant 5 told My role as core principal in this new normal has evolved much, encompassed various aspects to adapt to the changing educational landscapes such as digitalization, building trust and transparency, and enhancing teacher's competency.

Role of an Instructional Leader. Informant 7 postulated that So even before the new normal, I think the role of the principal or the school head, First is becoming an instructional leader. So as an instructional leader, I always have this acronym, well, LEAP, L -E -A -P. So you lead in creating an instructional plan or in case of the new normal learning continuity plan. And then E, ensure that resources are available in the implementation of the instruction. Letter A is to assist in the appropriate, efficient, and timely implementation of the instruction. And then letter P is to process any feedback that we gather in the monitoring and evaluation. So I think that's my role as a school head in, not just in the new normal, even before the pandemic, in the pandemic time, and in the new normal.

Being Adaptable Informant 8 contended that being the principal in the new normal, you should be there. When you say adaptive, you have to find ways on how to deliver education, considering the new normal that we are having now. And you must also be resourceful, being a leader, because there are a lot of challenges that might be encountered in the new model of delivering the education to our learners.

Taking on Administrative Role. Informant 10 responded that I describe myself as a school head, I am the one who find a ways that the student will still learn even they are not going to school everyday.

1.2 'What did you do in the context of the continuity of education in the new normal?

The responses generated 5 themes: Implementing Practical and Applicable Ways, Focused on Key Areas, Formulate Learning Continuity Plan, Explore New Strategies, and Taking on the Role of Instructional Leader.

Undertakings Done for the Continuity of Education in the New Normal

Implementing Practical and Applicable Ways. Informant 1 expressed that I plan and implement what is the most practical and applicable ways for our learners in every video, radio, phone or do some hybrid ways of classes as long as all the children have some chances to learn.

Focused on Key Areas. Informant 2 stressed out that Okay, in the context of the continuity of education in the new normal, I have focused on several key areas. First, I have worked to ensure that all students have access to the necessary technology and internet connectivity to participate in remote or hybrid learning. Parents also participated during that time by having to make their students or children have the necessary technology such as cell phone in order for them to be contacted with the new assignments assigned to them. I have also collaborated with the teachers to…to… develop engagement and effective instructional strategies for online or blended learning environments. Additionally, I have emphasized the importance of socio -emotional support, ahh…for both students and staff of the school, recognizing the impact that pandemic has had on their mental health and well -being. So that's what makes the contents of the continuity of education in the new normal to make them mentally healthy and a well -being individuals.

Formulate Learning Continuity Plan. Informant 3 signified that we formulated the school learning continuity plan to guide us in the implementation of the different programs, projects and activities of DepEd in the school level. As the School Principal, I took the lead with the School Planning Team in creating the School Basic Learning Continuity Plan. We collaborated to develop a realistic, appropriate, and reachable plan given the circumstances of our community and school. Para…we choose to have blended-printed modalities ingkaso bah! because online modalities are not feasible in the setting of our institution.

Explore New Strategies. Informant 5 asseverated that in the context of the continuity to education in the new normal, as a school head I am adopting the new normal situation by exploring new strategies to enhance resilience in response to digital transformation, adjusting to the new skill sets and implementing strategies to to navigate the evolving educational landscapes effectively.

Taking on the Role of Instructional Leader. Informant 7 had to say that in the context of continuity of education in the new normal, I always go back with the role as an instructional leader, as a instructional supervisor. So first and foremost, in the context of education in the new normal, as we have mentioned a while ago, as I have mentioned a while ago, that the new normal is the implementation of blended learning modalities in case of interruptions in face -to -face classes. And in the implementation of those blended learning modalities, first is you create a plan, an instructional plan or a learning continuity plan. So that's one of the things that I have done in the context of continuity of education in the new normal. Second is to check if there are available resources, ahh...so that we can implement those plans. And third is assist in the implementation of the plan, assist teachers in their roles as instructional instructors. And then, of course, we check and take note of the feedbacks that we have gathered based on the outputs of the students, based on the assessments done, etc. So those are the things that I have done in the context of the continuity of education in the new normal.

1.3 'What have you done as the principal of the school in this new normal?

Actions being Undertaken as School Principal in the New Normal. The responses generated 9 themes: Stay Connected with Teaching-Learning Issues, Communication with Stakeholders, Careful Review of Department Orders, Keeping in Touch with Teachers, Taking on Administrative Functions, Ensure the Safety of Stakeholders, Leading the Creation of the Plan, Series of Meetings and Establish Community Networks and Oversee School Activities.

Stay Connected with Teaching-Learning Issues. Informant 1 suggested that Sa akong pagka principal for 20 years, stay connected with the teaching learning issues. Unsay angayan natong buhaton, plan, re -plan or apply, adjust, evaluate, re -evaluate and re -apply what is effective in the teaching learning process. Last, a…a communication mask or ideal communication process shall be applied.

Communication with Stakeholders. Informant 2 denoted that as the school principal in the new normal, I have taken several actions to support the school community. I have communicated regularly with the parents, so with the teachers and as well as the students to gather feedback and address their concerns. I also work to secure additional funding and resources to support the implementation of new technologies and instructional materials. Additionally, I have advocated for the needs of the school at the district and the community level, ensuring that the unique challenges faced by our school are understood and address.

Careful Review of Department Orders. Informant 3 shared that Study carefully the department orders or guidelines relative to the implementation of the educational programs during the new normal. In the new normal, I…I did my best to use my technology expertise as a school principal. In…in order to prepare for the modern work environment and learning modalities, I took virtual classes. In order to facilitate collaborative work, I increased the internet allowance and gave tablets to each grade level head aron nindot ang outcome for my management. (Study carefully the department orders or guidelines relative to the implementation of the educational programs during the new normal. In the new normal. I did my best to use my technology expertise as a school principal. In order to prepare for the modern work environment and learning modalities, I took virtual classes. In order to facilitate collaborative work, I increased the internet allowance and gave tablets to each grade level head so that the outcome is good for my management)

Keeping in Touch with Teachers. Informant 4 denoted that First, is I have, I have contacted all the teachers through cellphones through Internet that what do they do and I have also followed the correct protocol as given by the Department of Health, Department of Education. And I also instructed the teachers to follow also what is the correct protocol and What I needed in the classroom to in order to Be aware of that of the contamination of that covid.

Taking on Administrative Functions. Informant 5 imparted that As a school principal, these are somethings as I have done during this new normal letter A managing school operations, letter B ensuring safe school safety, letter C Providing technical support for teachers, letter D building strong partnerships with the internal and external stakeholders and letter E monitoring academic progress.

Ensure the Safety of Stakeholders. Informant 6 contended that Of course, as a school principal, number one is you have to protect your teacher. You have to protect your pupils or your students that would be free from any

contagious diseases. So first and foremost is, ahh, we consider the health. And so we establish protocols in the school. We establish protocols and we establish different ways on communicating our parents and our students. We establish a system in which it would be beneficial to all, beneficial to the teachers, beneficial to the parents and to the students. So there is a protocol that has been established and a system that is really followed during the time.

Leading the Creation of the Plan. Informant 7 asserted that I have led in the creation of the plan. So into more specific things and then another thing you're going to know, specifically in the creation of the plan. So, we have, we had this profiling of the students. How many students do we have. Then also providing the teachers. We also include the address of the students, the available resources that they have, gadgets that they have.

Series of Meetings and Establish Community Networks. Informant 9 conveyed that Of course, we had actually conducted a series of meetings to pass out everything and unsay need. Second, we had to establish community networks to support us, especially in the reproduction of those modules considering the budget kay nagpabilin man burag nakalinya naba or intended kay mas mingdako among gasto for the reproduction of the modules for the teaching-learning supplies. We harness our part to support some community stakeholders para ma suffice ang panginahanglan Then, of course, we had to conducted a series of monitoring.

Oversee School Activities. Informant 10 reiterated that As a school head, I am the one who oversee every aspect of the school activities, the teacher's assignment and and students achievements specially during the normal if students really gain knowledge in the new set-up.

2.1 'What are the problems you encountered in managing the school in this new normal?

Problems Encountered in Managing the School in the New Normal. The responses generated ten themes: Problem with Communication, Implementation of Teaching-Learning, Sourcing Out of Funds, Maintaining Reliable Internet Connectivity, Facilities for Health Protocols, Health and Safety Concerns, Data Collection and Monitoring System, Limited Resources, Support of Parents and Retrieval of Activity Sheets.

Problem with Communication. Informant 1 postulated that The problems that I encountered in managing the school in this new normal on how communications are done. And on how to motivate, orient and monitor the teaching force.

Implementation of Teaching-Learning. informant 1 revealed that How to implement teaching learning without violating the proper health protocols. Then the next problems on how to manage the budget.

Sourcing Out of Funds. Informant 1 cited that Problems on how to source out funds for the learning materials. Lastly, is problems on the transportation limitations.

Maintaining Reliable Internet Connectivity. Informant 2 stressed on challenges during new normal that Some of the problems, I have encountered in managing the school in this new normal include Maintaining consistent and reliable internet connectivity and technology infrastructure. Ensuring that all students have access to the necessary devices and resources for remote or hybrid learning. Addressing the increased workload and stress experienced by teachers who are adapting to new teaching methods and managing the emotional needs of their students. Navigating the constantly changing guidelines and regulations from local, state and federal authorities. Securing additional funding and resources to support the evolving needs of the school community.

Facilities for Health Protocols. Informant 4 narrated that Produce the materials that are needed as a protocol in entering the school like for example the washing facilities like that and Another is We are very hesitant to enter the school because we are very hesitant to Travel along the way in going to school because you are afraid of that contamination of virus. Those are the problems that I had encountered.

Health and Safety Concerns. Informant 5 shared the problems encountered during post-pandemic age that For me, the problems that we encountered in managing the school in these new normal times is, the health and safety concerns for teachers and learners, school budget constraints, student behavior management, teacher training and support, and parental involvement.

Data Collection and Monitoring System. Informant 6 pointed out that Of course, again, one of the problems is the data collection, the monitoring system, because it's too difficult to monitor, and sometimes it's the data given reliable, it's the figures given are true, and what they are doing is really what they are doing, because it's purely on paper reports, and you cannot see actual scenario, actual processes, particularly in the learning process, so that's one of the problems.

Limited Resources. informant 7 voice-out that So the problems, one problem is the limited resources in our school, the limited resources that our students also experience or have, and then the monitoring of students' learning is one of the problems that we have encountered in managing the school in the new normal.

Support of Parents. Informant 8 had this to say the problems during new normal that Problems such as the encouragement of the parents to support their children in learning while they are in in respective homes, the problems on parents who don't have enough time to assist their children and of course the risk of having that for example the the fear of having the COVID that we are experiencing in the present times.

Retrieval of Activity Sheets. Informant 9 narrated that Then second, the problem I encountered, isa sa pag retrieved sa mga activity sheets ug mga Answer sheets, no? ng mga bata.

2.2 'When schools were interrupted in the new normal education system, what did you do as a school principal to provide the continuity of students' education process?

The responses generated eight themes: Introduce Hybrid Teaching, Work with Leadership Team, Prioritize Social and Emotional Well -Being, Maintain Open Communication with Families, Follow Orders from DepEd, Give Instruction to Teachers, Implementation of Learning Continuity Plan and Training Teachers Expected Strategies.

Introduce Hybrid Teaching. Informant 1 recounted that so what I did is do some hybrid teaching learning approach by using radio, phones, lectures and modules.

Work with Leadership Team. This was informant 2 challenged that I took several steps to provide a continuity of students' education process. First, I worked with my leadership team, more particularly the teachers, to quickly transition to a remote learning model, remote or distance learning, ensuring that all students have access to the necessary learning and teaching materials such as modules.

Prioritize Social and Emotional Well -Being. Informant 2 emphasized that I prioritized the social, emotional, the social, emotional well -being of our students, implementing virtual counseling devices. If not, virtual through the use of group chats in their respective classes wherein the teacher will able to give the lessons there some questions to be answered by the by the learners then there will be wellness activities to be done at home and regular check -ins to address their mental health needs.

Maintain Open Communication with Families. Informant 2 was pointed out that I also maintain open communication with families providing them with the resources especially where to get their modules and support to help them their children engage in the new learning modalities in New Albay Elementary School the new learning modality being applied is the so -called the Distant learning modular modalities.

Follow Orders from DepEd. This was pointed out by informant 4 that All right, so during that time when schools were interrupted in the new normal education system, so we just followed the order of our officials and our secretary, our director, our superintendent on how to provide learning to the students without contact.

Give Instruction to Teachers. Informant 6 narrated that What I did is, there was an instruction given to all the teachers that that modules will be distributed to the pupils or students in cases of asynchronous declaration or calamities that will come. Automatically, it will be shifted to blended learning. So, we are using blended learning. When there are disturbance of interruptions of classes, we go on the blended modular approaches in which the teacher instructed that in every end of the class, the student should know that if there are incidents that will happen or declarations that will happen, we will follow this module.

Implementation of Learning Continuity Plan. Informant 7 pointed out that okay so I think as a school head we were we were required by the division or by the higher and offices to really prepare a learning continuity plan and

that's what we did so we we we had this learning continuity plan to ensure that learning will continue even if the even if the face -to -face classes were being interrupted so one of those plans I think it's good to mention that we encourage the the students or the parents to provide home learning spaces in their in their respective homes so there's a space even a small space for them na dinhea mag study ang bata. So, then to really ensure that there's continuity of students of students learning so you we we establish a monitoring system to ensure that students are really doing their tasks the tasks given to them even if wala sila sa school. (okay so I think as a school head we were we were required by the division or by the higher and offices to really prepare a learning continuity plan and that's what we did so we had this learning continuity plan to ensure that learning will continue even if the even if the face -to -face classes were being interrupted so one of those plans I think it's good to mention that we encourage the students or the parents to provide home learning spaces in their respective homes so there's a space even a small space for them where the child will study. So, then to really ensure that there's continuity of students of students learning so you or we establish a monitoring system to ensure that students are really doing their tasks, the tasks given to them even if they are not in school)

Training Teachers Expected Strategies. Informant 9 had this to say that Of course, my teachers are trained on the expected strategies, to ensure that the learnings would still continue noh, na mahatag og ma deliver sa students are even within the bounds of their home. That's why we have actually, in our school, we have actually implemented a project like Project ISA that includes inclusive and integrative students' activities. That is actually very doable activities. In the school, there are many students who are within the bounds of the four corners of their house or their home. Mga activities didto are actually helping the students to discover their hidden skills and talents. (Of course, my teachers are trained on the expected strategies, to ensure that the learning would still continue, that can be delivered to the students are even within the bounds of their home. That's why we have actually, in our school, we have actually implemented a project like Project ISA that includes inclusive and integrative students' activities. That is actually very doable activities. In the school, there are many students who are within the boundaries of the four corners of their house or their home. Activities there are actually helping the students to discover their hidden skills and talents)

3.1 'What are your best practices to overcome the challenges you encountered?

The responses generated eight themes: Establish Open Communication with Stakeholders, Developing Comprehensive Emergency, Use School MOOE, Introduce Flexible Learning Modality, Encourage Parents to Provide Home Learning Spaces, Partner with Stakeholders, Establish Community Networks and Soliciting Ideas from Superiors and Colleagues.

Establish Open Communication with Stakeholders. Informant 1 cited that the best practices that I have to overcome the chance you encounter. So the best practices I had. First is the establishment of an open communication to parents and learners, debit authorities, health authorities, and local teachers and authorities and other stakeholders. Then teamwork of the teaching forces of the school, proper management of resources, and the last, improvement of ICT manipulation of teachers.

Developing Comprehensive Emergency. Informant 2 revealed that Some of the best practices that school principals have implemented to overcome the challenges that they have encountered in the new normal include developing comprehensive emergency and continuity of operations plans to ensure the school is prepared for unexpected disruptions, establishing robust communication channels and feedback loops with all stakeholders including students, families, teachers and community partners, investing in professional development and training for teachers to build their capacity to deliver effective remote or hybrid instruction, implementing innovative and flexible learning models that cater to the diverse needs and learning styles of students, collaborating with local health authorities and following evidence -based health and safety protocols to protect the school community, fostering a culture of innovation, creativity and adaptability within the school to embrace the changes and challenges of the new normal.

Use School MOOE. Informant 4 stressed out the challenges during new normal that The best practices that I can say during the time in order to overcome the challenges is the school MOOE and the amount provided by the DepEd for the covid were all procured and distributed to all the teachers and Another is we all we followed all the instructions on what to do about the social distancing. The making the entrance and exit of our school that they have to enter in one gate and they have to exit in one gate. It was our school guard who is in search of Guiding the parents or visitors in entering the gate and where to exit. So on every Classrooms have their own washing paraphernalia.

Introduce Flexible Learning Modality. This was the essence of informant 5s sharing that The best practices that I implemented to overcome the challenges are flexible learning modality, that is number one. Implement flexible learning modality that caters diverse learners' needs. Number two is the innovative teaching strategies. Encourage teachers to explore innovative teaching and promote engagement, creativity and critical thinking in online and hybrid learning environments.

Encourage Parents to Provide Home Learning Spaces. Informant 7 stated that I think I have mentioned it a while ago also that one of the best practices that we had in our school is we encourage the parents to provide home learning spaces for their students. As I have mentioned that one of the problems we have encountered is limited resources for the students and then also we had a challenge in monitoring them if we are really doing their tasks. So as a school head, we or I established a strong partnership with the parents and encouraged them to provide home learning space for their students and then in that home learning space sa bahay there should be maybe gadgets they can use and then a place for their modules saan ilalagay ang mga modules nila. And then a place for them to really study and then we ask them to provide pictures as a testament that they are really doing their tasks and then ask the parents to help us in monitoring the students. So that's one of the best practices that we have done to overcome those challenges that we have mentioned.

(I think I have mentioned it a while ago also that one of the best practices that we had in our school is that we encourage the parents to provide home learning spaces for their students. As I have mentioned that one of the problems we have encountered is limited resources for the students and then also we had a challenge in monitoring them if we are really doing their tasks. So as a school head, we or I established a strong partnership with the parents and encouraged them to provide home learning space for their students and then in that home learning space at home there should be maybe gadgets they can use and then a place for their modules where to put their modules. And then a place for them to really study and then we ask them to provide pictures as a testament that they are really doing their tasks and then ask the parents to help us in monitoring the students. So that's one of the best practices that we have done to overcome those challenges that we have mentioned)

Partner with Stakeholders. This was emphasized by Informant 8 that the best practices or the best practice that I usually use to overcome the challenges is partnership among our stakeholders, because we all know that without the support of the community or our stakeholders, it would be difficult for the school to deliver the education alone. So that is why it is very important that we should have a link to our community, our partners outside our school, so that the education will still be delivered despite the challenges that we have at present.

Establish Community Networks. Informant 9 stated that One is, of course establish the community networks. Then, we need to bring the students to continuously in the sense na kanang thinking on the ways even naa ta sa situations malingaw gehapon ang mga bata. Naa gehapon tay activities na introduce sa ilaha maski wala natay face -to -face set -up. Sa pagbalik bitaw sa New Normal, dili baya jud tanan noh kundi kadto lang nay consent . And of course, naa pay nabilin, kundi dili tanan masulod sa classroom. Imagine ang classroom, maximum of 20 plus. So, Daghan pajud mabilin. So e shifting para sunod semana lahi nasad o class para naa silay chance maka apel sa face to face class. So we need to establish strong community networks. (One is, of course, establish the community networks. Then, we need to bring the students to continuously in the sense that thinking on the ways even if we are in situations the children will enjoy the day. We have activities to introduce to them today even though we don't have a face-to-face set-up. When going back to the New Normal, not all of them, but only those who consent. And of course, there are still some left, but not all of them can enter the classroom. Imagine the classroom, maximum of 20 plus. So, there is still a lot left. So they are shifting to a different class next week so they have a chance to appeal in the face to face class. So we need to establish strong community networks)

Soliciting Ideas from Superiors and Colleagues. Informant 10 conveyed that The best practices that I overcome the challenges encountered in the new normal, first by collecting ideas from supervisors, co-school heads down to the teachers.

3.2 'What are your best practices to overcome the challenges you encountered?

Ways Used for Effective Implementation of Practices. The responses generated ten themes: Through Constant Monitoring, Engage in Ongoing Professional Learning and Collaboration with Peers, Have a Stakeholders Forum,

Everyone Follows the Instructions, Through Monitoring and Evaluation, Allow Others to Give Their Thoughts, Constant Communication and Consultation, Collaborate with Teachers and By Making Practices Attainable.

Through Constant Monitoring. Informant 1 described his view about the implementation of effective practices; First, the school head must have constant monitoring noh, the school head should have constant monitoring and evaluation on the teachers, learners, and parents. Then, constant monitoring on the strategies applied and the resource managed. Then, constant monitoring of the teachers, preparations, and outputs aron effective ang implementation. (First, the school head must have constant monitoring, the school head should have constant monitoring and evaluation on the teachers, learners, and parents. Then, constant monitoring on the strategies applied and the resource managed. Then, constant monitoring of the teachers, preparations, and outputs to make the implementation effective)

Engage in Ongoing Professional Learning and Collaboration with Peers. Informant 2 testified that To implement the best practices effectively. As a school principal, I engage in ongoing professional learning and collaboration with peers to share strategies from one another. Then, allocated, dedicated time and resources for planning implementation and continuous improvement of these practices. Aside from that one, empowered and supportive the staff to take ownership of the initiatives and contribute to the collective problem solving process. More particularly during that time because we implemented a distant learning. One of the best practices we had that time is stakeholders, both internal and external stakeholders, extended their help through giving instructional materials such as bond papers and inks. So that the teacher can be able to print more of the materials for them to distribute to the children for the continuity of the learning.

Everyone Follows the Instructions. Informant 4 added that I implemented that effectively because it was followed. It was followed by everyone. No one is, you cannot find anyone who is not following such instructions. Everyone followed the instructions.

Through Monitoring and Evaluation. Informant 5 mentioned that I implemented these practices through making new things with the features and stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of the programs. Monitoring and evaluation of the programs has made the practices we made more effective and successful.

Allow Others to Give Their Thoughts. Informant 6 stressed on the best practices to overcome challenges; Well, it has been implemented effectively because you are doing it, and it can be effectively done when you have time to talk and sit down with them, you know, talk then, allow them to give their sincere thoughts, usually, what is she really through opinion with this matter? Let me hear it. No offense, no offense. And those actions that I have done, is it beneficial to you or not? So, it can be really effectively or effectively, it can be effectively implemented when you give time to listen and allow them to say their thoughts and sitting aside time like confidence, like just a normal conversation in the office, coffee time, while you are eating, you are talking, then asking their opinions.

Constant Communication and Consultation. Informant 8 stated that So, one way of implementing those effectively is constant communication and Consultation among our partners. So every now and then I try to I try to attend meetings and try to consult the community especially our local government unit on what are the things that they can offer, they can do or they can help us with regards to the challenges that the school is facing. So Communication is very important and also your presence in terms of gathering or meetings with those partners.

Collaborate with Teachers. Informant 9 revealed that So, We need to collaborate with the teachers, nga masabtan sad sa mga teachers. Kay bisan wala ang mga bata busy kaayo kay daghang gepangbuhat and Of course, getagaan pa namo silag mga activities. Dapat una ma embrace sa mga teachers, na burag prime movers ba!, para mahatag sad sa mga estudyante nga kadtong gebuhat namo na innovation. And of course, mahatag sa mga teachers kay ge embrace na daan sa mga teachers ang need na angay ehatag sa mga bata. Kumbaga ang willingness sa teachers to do the activity, busy og kapoy jud. Pero Nakaya ra kay nalipay man ang mga parents, nalingaw sab ang mga bata nga naa lang sila sa ilang mga balay. Ang isa lang jud is ma love and ma embrace sa teachers. Tungod sila ang prime movers kay sila ang muduot ana para sa mga bata. (So, we need to collaborate with the teachers, which the teachers understand. Because even if the children are not there, they are very busy because there are many things to do and of course, we will provide them with activities. The teachers should be embraced first, who seem to be prime movers!, so that the students can be given the innovation that we are doing. And of course, the teachers can give it because the teachers already embrace the need that should be given to the children. It seems the willingness of the teachers to do

the activity, they are busy and tired. But it was okay because the parents were happy, the children also enjoyed being in their homes. The only thing is to be loved and embraced by the teachers. Because they are the prime movers because they are the ones who will do it for the children)

By Making Practices Attainable. Informant 10 had this to say that We implement by making our practices measurable or attainable, preparing to implement change and involve everyone and get feedback.

3.3 'How did you resolve these challenges?

Ways in Resolving These Challenges. The responses generated seven themes: Deal With It One at a Time, Conducting Thorough Needs Assessment, Careful Planning, Through the Help of Local Government Officials, By Building Linkages, Harness PTA and Community Stakeholders' Support and Identify the Main Problem.

Deal With It One at a Time. Informant 1 saw problems as crucial components of growth in the classroom or school as a whole, especially those involving the principal and teachers' relationship. He relayed that So I resolved those challenges of course we are human it is normal in our lives that we will encounter so many challenges in our lives so of course as a school principal I always expect challenges and deal with them one at a time do not leave them unsolved especially if learning of children is at risk.

Conducting Thorough Needs Assessment. Informant 2 admitted that, that being the school principal, those challenges that we have encountered in the new normal through a combination of problem -solving strategies. This will be resolved by number one, conducting thorough needs assessment to identify the specific challenges and 10 points within the school community, collaborating with the cross -functional teams, example, technology, what are the facilities of the school, of course, considering the mental health of the teacher and the learners, para di magkakaroon ng stress and anxiety, and of course, based on the depth and curriculum, the K -12 curriculum, what are those most essential learning competencies will be given to the learners and more particularly to the teachers, what are the specific modules they are going to print. So those are the things that we need to cope up or to resolve those challenges during that time. Thank you to all the stakeholders, both the community stakeholders, internal and external for extending their help. And aside from that one, posturing a culture of innovation and creativity. So some of the modules, if not printed, are being given to the learners in a soft copy because there are some learners have access to technology and they have the internet connection. So instead of printing it, giving it in a soft copy. So that's how we resolve those challenges. And aside from that one, continuity, monitoring, and even we think the effectiveness of their intervention and making adjustments as needed based on feedback and data gathered from the field. (Those challenges, yes. Being the school principal, those challenges that we have encountered in the new normal through a combination of problem-solving strategies. This will be resolved by number one, conducting thorough needs assessment to identify the specific challenges and 10 points within the school community, collaborating with the cross-functional teams, example, technology, what are the facilities of the school, of course, considering the mental health of the teacher and the learners, so that there will be no stress and anxiety, and of course, based on the depth and curriculum, the K -12 curriculum, what are those most essential learning competencies will be given to the learners and more particularly to the teachers, what are the specific modules they are going to print. So those are the things that we need to cope up or to resolve those challenges during that time. Thank you to all the stakeholders, both the community stakeholders, internal and external for extending their help. And aside from that one, posturing a culture of innovation and creativity. So some of the modules, if not printed, are being given to the learners in a soft copy because there are some learners who have access to technology and they have the internet connection. So instead of printing it, giving it in a soft copy. So that's how we resolve those challenges. And aside from that one, continuity, monitoring, and even we think the effectiveness of their intervention and making adjustments as needed based on feedback and data gathered from the field).

Careful Planning. Informant 3 shared that Careful planning, strict implementation, regular monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of the implemented different programs or projects and activities.

Through the Help of Local Government Officials. Informant 4 shared that Okay, so all the challenges that I have encountered in the school, as school manager, were all resolved through the help of our local government officials, our municipal government officials, and also the teachers. They are helping one another in order to solve any problems that may come out in the school. That's all of it.

By Building Linkages. , informant 8 implied that Of course, we tried to the school is always open for any available resources that our stakeholders will offer and we try to broaden our perspective on delivery of education so it means that we try to give importance not just on our own management but also the ideas and the resources that our stakeholders or our community might offer to our school.

Harness PTA and Community Stakeholders' Support. Informant 9 articulated that So, pinaka importante ipa harness ang PTA and community stakeholders. Ang isa sa pinakadakong challenges is ang budget lang jud. Na suffice tungod kay Nakita sad sa mga stakeholders, we are actually doing our best to deliver the quality of education para sa mga bata kay Nakita man nila. So, of course, that will help us. We harness lots of supports, coming from our stakeholders. Tungod sa ilang supporta o wala jud sila ninghunong, of course, we gave recognition or certificate of recommendations through virtual na pamaagi. We send those through e-mail ang mga certificate of recognition intended as gift of appreciation or thanks giving sa mga individuals or business sectors nga nagatabang sa amoa. Bisan dili face to face ang set-up but still gehatag namo among best to give their recognition sa pamaagi nga pag e-mail sa tag-sa tagsa nila. (So, to harness are the PTA and community stakeholders. One of the biggest challenges is the budget. We are actually doing our best to deliver the quality of education for the students. So, of course that will help us. We harness lots of supports coming from stakeholders. Because of their unending support of course we gave recognition or certificate of recommendations virtually. We send those certificate of recognition through e-mail as a thanksgiving to individuals or business sectors who help us. Even if the recognition is not done face to face but we still gave them such recognition.)

Identify the Main Problem. Informant 10 said that We resolved these challenges by identify the main problem, find solution and implement best mechanisms to resolve the problem.

4.1 'What have been the changes in your perspective on educational management in the new normal?

Changes in Perspective on educational management in the new normal. The responses generated four themes: It Never Changed, Gained Deeper Appreciation, Changing One's Perspective and Teaching People Become Resilient. Informant 1 avowed that So my perspective on education, management were never changed in the new normal. It only broadens the best.

Gained Deeper Appreciation. Informant 2 denoted his perspective in managing the school during new normal that My perspective on educational management has certainly evolved in the new normal. I have gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of agility, adaptability and creative problem solving in the face of unprecedented challenges.

Changing One's Perspective. Informant 3 imparted that it really changed our perspective, especially when we are in the new normal situation. So we have a new educational system, so the school heads must, you know do something nga para sa mga bata o learners because it is our responsibility and being a school head you must lead in times of new normal kay bag-ong edukasyon karon. So we should not stick only on one methods but it must be many.

Teaching People Become Resilient. Informant 9 articulated that First, as a new normal man, it actually taught us to become more resilient in terms of education. We are facing the catastrophic or effects of global warming. We need to be resilient enough, we need to move on, we need to move on, we need to move forward. Ang isa lang jud nato hunaon karon,[one thing we need to do] is we need to be more resilient, nga dili ta mawad-an ug paglaum kay naa mga tao nga dili taas og[not to lose hope since others do not have high] tolerance in terms of stress. In the institution of education, we need to teach them how to be resilient. We need to teach our students, not only our students, of course our teachers, all of us in the community, to be more resilient kay daghan pa dili lang tong pandemic kundli daghan pa muabotay na mga challenges [since many people during the pandemic are affected but there are still many challenges to come. So, we need to teach our students and all of us. Every problem there are corresponding solutions. Ing ana lang jud na ang tanan, pangetaan lang jud og pamaagi [that is the one, we need to look for means]. We have to stay in a positive mood. Of course, in our education system, today we do not only focus on the traditional way within the four corners of the classroom like face to face with the teacher. We have to find out more about technology. We have to try our best to look for means to solve the problems on internet connection. We can find out more about it to shift, that is why we have to incorporate this into our budget in the school MOOE

4.2 'What is your emergency action plan for the school in general?

Emergency Action Plan for the School in General. The responses generated seven themes: Implement Teaching Strategies and School Activities for Learners, Following Key Elements, Contingency Plan, Follow COVID Protocols, Flexible Learning Modality, Collect All the Data of Students and Learning Continuity Plan.

Implement Teaching Strategies and School Activities for Learners. Informant 1 responded that So my emergency action plan for the school in general, think, plan and implement teaching strategies and school activities for our learners, all types of learners, for example, all types of learners, be resilient on the challenges against on our education program implementation. Again, always think benefits in favor of our learners.

Following Key Elements. Informant 2 articulated that my emergency action plan for the school in general in the new normal includes the following Key elements number one there should be comprehensive emergency and continuity of operation plans that outline the steps to be taken in the event of school disruption including protocols for transitioning to remote or hybrid learning that is what we call the so -called continuity plan for the new normal then we also have that so -called you have the robust communication channels and emergency notification systems to quickly disseminate information and updates to all stakeholders there should be a hotline on where to contact in case of fire you have the hotline for the fire for the police for the DOH for the local health as BHW then we also have for the barangay you have the hotline for the office of the barangay captain for our municipal you have the hotline for our municipal mayor. In every sector of the community you have that hotline so that when there is issues need to be answered we can easily contact with them aside from that one provides for ensuring the availability of necessary technology devices and internet connectivity to support remote or hybrid learning strategies permitting the health and safety of the school community including the implementation of COVID -19 protocols and the procurement of necessary. Yes the procurement of necessary personal protective equipment personal such as some teachers in school will be provided with alcohol, personal hygiene and then said from that one there will be face masks procured by the school MOOE for them to use.

Contingency Plan. Informant 3 shared that The school had prepared the school contingency plan which the Department of Education is requiring of every school.

Follow COVID Protocols. Informant 4 explained that Generally, when the situation comes up, the first thing that I have done is to contact all the teachers, tell all the teachers what are the instructions given from our higher officials in regards to no face-to-face learning. So, one is, I let them clear their classrooms, they remove their curtains, they open all the windows, and I told them not to enter the schools. Another is, I also make an emergency plan of the schools, what to do during this COVID time, when there is already an order that we can visit the school in half-day session, they can enter the schools as needed, as called up.

So, we made an emergency plan that is to avoid contact from each other, what to do when they enter the classrooms, what to do when they enter the offices, the proper distancing, and they are washing their hands with alcohol from time to time. So, that was a very necessary one, the washing of alcohol every now and then. That's a very needed one. Also, I disseminate to the teachers what to do as prescribed by the Department of Education and the Department of Health. Those are my emergency action plan during the time.

Flexible Learning Modality. Informant 5 shared that My emergency action plan is all about the flexible learning modality in which the school has emergency action plan for the continuity in the delivery of quality basic education during challenging times.

Collect All the Data of Students. Informant 6 testified that my emergency action plan is that the school will be prepared in any way. The preparedness of the school, of course, and data. Of course, that's what I have mentioned earlier, data driven.

Learning Continuity Plan. Informant 7 had this to say that the emergency action plan for the school, so we have this learning continuity plan that we had made. So basically what we did, so what we did in the school is first create this plan and then you assess if we have these available resources modules. Then we gave all the resources, we gave all the modules to the students from quarter one to quarter four. So that if there are interruptions and expected interruptions in face to face classes, the teachers can just provide them or give them learning tasks to do. Of course, depending on the situation, if learning can still continue, if there are major disasters, so that's another thing, that's another story.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study's scope was restricted to the principals of ten schools in the Maragusan West and East District, Davao de Oro Division. Nevertheless, the following conclusions for future research are taken into consideration:

First, findings may analyze how the new normal has affected school principals' leadership beliefs and tactics over time. Second, examine the difficulties and experiences faced by principals in various educational environments in this new normal, including public and private schools, as well as urban and rural schools.

Third,   study the emotional and psychological toll that the new normal is having on school principals. Stress and burnout among school principals and support networks and efficient coping mechanisms and role and efficacy of programs for school administrators seeking mental health support. Fourth, examine how the new normal is affecting school principals' ability to govern effectively through the integration of technology. In addition, the impact of school leaders' level of digital literacy on school administration particularly the efficacy of courses on technology training and addressing the differences in technological access across school principals and their respective institutions. Fifth, analyze how policy and governance have shaped school principals' experiences in the context of the new normal. Sixth, determine the difficulties and experiences faced by school principals affect the general quality of education and the outcomes of students. The experience of principals and academic achievement of students are correlated. About the ways in which educational disparities have been mitigated or made worse by principals' responses. Also, recognizing creative approaches that have improved the standard of education.

Seventh, examine the growth and use of crisis management and resilience among principals of educational institutions. Strategies that are effective in helping school administrators develop resilience. Recognizing and sharing the finest crisis management strategies. Gather as much information as possible about the difficulties and problems faced by school principals by combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. To pinpoint the essential success criteria, conduct in-depth case studies of educational institutions that have effectively adapted to the new normal. Eight, to collect information from a broad and varied sample of school principals, use surveys and interviews. Use longitudinal research to monitor changes and advancements over an extended period of time. Collaborate on research projects with academic institutions, legislators, and mental health specialists to tackle complex issues.

Lastly, future research on these topics can shed more light on the difficulties and problems faced by school principals in the context of the "new normal," which can help develop better procedures, guidelines, and support networks to improve educational leadership and management.

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