Assessing the Complex Operation of Blended Learning for English Instruction in a Public High School in the Philippines

Danica Jae B. Sagun[1], Greg T. Pawilen[2], Sarah Jen C. Paccarangan[3], Rufo Gil Z. Albor[4], Hannah L. Patindol[5], Phrygian P. Almeda[6], Daisy V. Pelegrina[7]

[1,2,3,4,5,6,7]University of the Philippines Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study aims to describe stakeholders' experiences in blended learning at a public high school in Laguna, Philippines, during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Method:** This qualitative study was conducted through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with English teachers, learners, and the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) coordinators and a Key Informant Interview (KII) with the English department head. **Results:** Three main themes emerged from the study: factors that encourage stakeholder collaboration, barriers to stakeholder collaboration, and solutions to collaboration challenges. **Novelty:** Overall, the study results show how important collaboration is in overcoming the difficulties associated with blended learning and creating a positive learning environment for the stakeholders. By fostering a collaborative environment, stakeholders can work together to address the complexities of blended learning, optimize the benefits of the modality, and create a compelling and engaging learning experience for all learners.

INTRODUCTION

The educational systems worldwide have been embroiled due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus in 2019. It has affected billions of students in more than a hundred countries, causing the most significant disruption of educational systems in human history (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Many educational institutions abandoned face-to-face classes (Devi et al., 2021). Therefore, many nations have adopted various learning delivery modalities based on the resources and conditions in their areas.

Blended learning was one of the primary learning modalities used by different countries during the pandemic. Developed countries have swiftly altered their educational programs to incorporate blended learning. Learning management systems like Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams became increasingly popular and were used in teaching. According to Gaol and Hutagalung (2020), blended learning has become the most prevalent learning method in developed countries because accessing the technology needed to conduct it is relatively easy. After all, practically all students and teachers residing in these countries have access to laptops and smartphones with high-speed internet connections (Devi et al., 2021).

On the other hand, adopting blended learning in developing countries poses many challenges. Many students, especially those who reside in rural and underdeveloped areas, need access to reliable internet connections, which affects their academic performance (Alvarez, 2020). Also, some students from these countries can only use Android smartphones, incompatible with e-learning platforms. The infrastructure and materials for blended learning were also either lacking or

The teachers still needed to familiarize themselves with this method (Sirisakpanich, 2022; Chandra, 2023).

In the Philippines, blended learning is a concept that has been introduced previously since numerous colleges and universities nationwide have implemented it for a long time. However, many studies have proved that there are still gaps and issues that must be addressed. Teachers in the country see blended learning as time-consuming. It takes more time to prepare the materials for this learning modality than face-to-face interaction, making it a physical and mental burden for them. Blended learning was also viewed as inapplicable in the country due to the lack of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) facilities. There needs to be more adequate maintenance of available ICT resources, and there is a need for a bigger budget. There are also places with no steady energy supply and complex internet connectivity, especially in rural areas (Alvarez, 2020).

Developing different learning strategies and modalities makes learning more dynamic and complex. Due to the changing environment and the rapid development of technology, which are critical factors in learning, it has become more intricate to understand. That said, blended learning must now be viewed as complex because it consists of many elements connected in various ways that must collectively work for its operation's success and address its challenges effectively. Many relationships can exist within a blended learning environment (Mcgee & Poojary, 2020). Although numerous studies have been done to understand this modality, only some have offered such views. One study by Mcgee & Poojary (2020), which is only relevant to higher education institutions in health science, examined the perceived relationships between students, teachers, institutional administrators, and learning support staff within the blended learning modality. The other research gave more attention to the linear relationships that exist within the blended learning modality, such as the relationship between the instructional practices of teachers and the academic performance of students in English (Olayvar, 2021)

It is imperative that this study was done to delve deeper into the blended learning modality, given its capacity to effectively broaden the avenues of teaching and learning, surpassing the constraints of time and space (Alvarez, 2020) while also considering the unique contextual factors of the country. The Philippines still holds one of the top spots as a disaster-prone country. Its islands endure the most recurrent natural calamities like floods, typhoons, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and droughts (Cordero, 2024), which can disrupt school activities. The local government units have recently canceled face-to-face classes due to the extreme heat. Schools were instructed to shift to alternative learning modes, including printed and digitized modules, activity sheets, and online platforms (Sevillano, 2024). During times of disaster, the education sector is the most vulnerable. Schools and students in the country are highly susceptible to these hazards (Parallag, 2024). Furthermore, the study holds significance in refining the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) established by the Department of Education, which was instrumental in satisfying students' learning experiences during the pandemic (Pregoner & Baguio, 2024). In unforeseen transitions from face-to-face classes to distance learning, such as those experienced during the pandemic, the BE-LCP must offer guidance on adapting to these changes (Villarin et al., 2024).

This study explored blended learning through the experiences of various stakeholders, including learners, teachers, school support staff, and a school administrator. It specifically sought to investigate how these stakeholders collaborated

during the operation of blended learning to teach English in a public high school in the Philippines. The study also aimed to enumerate the issues and challenges experienced by the stakeholders that have affected their collaboration and to comprehend how they addressed these issues and challenges.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research design was employed in the study to gather the blended learning experiences of multiple stakeholders in a public high school to assess the complexity of the said modality. Qualitative research has the advantage of describing human behavioral patterns and processes that may be difficult to assess. Through this method, participants can describe how, why, or what they were feeling, thinking, and experiencing at a specific moment or during an exciting occurrence. It can be challenging to properly quantify phenomena such as experiences, attitudes, and behaviors (Tenny et al., 2022). The study applied a case study approach to gather information about stakeholders' collaboration and problem-solving processes in a blended learning setting. This approach is the most suitable since it examines a single case's complexity and specificity to comprehend its operation within significant conditions.

The participants of the study were based on the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (CABLS) Framework (Figure 2) of Wang et al. (2015). The six-dimensional theoretical framework was created to "facilitate a deeper, more accurate understanding of the dynamic and adaptive nature of blended learning." The framework comprises six subsystems: the learner, teacher, technology, content, learning support, and institution. The six subsystems interact dynamically and non-linearly with each other, just like any complex system would do. The stability of each of these subsystems depends on the other subsystems, but each also has its unique traits and functions.
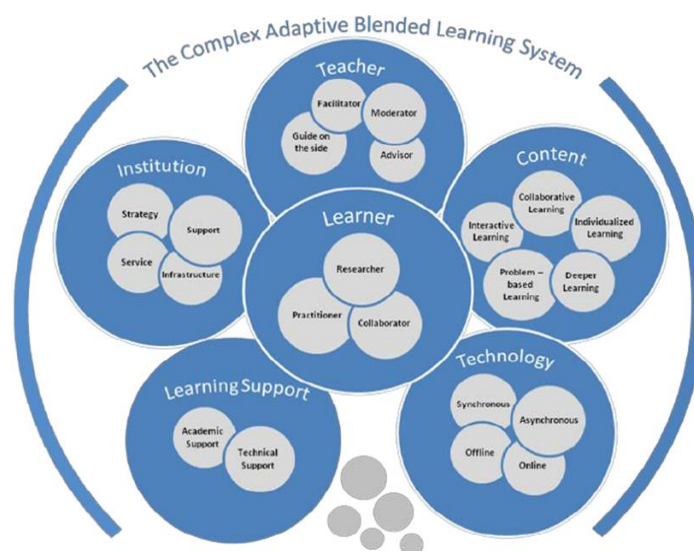

Figure 1. Complex adaptive blended learning system framework.

A non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, was utilized to choose the participants. Three from each of the groups of junior high school learners, English teachers, school support staff, and one (1) school administrator were included in the study, for a total of ten (10) participants. The three (3) participants from the mentioned stakeholder groups participated in focus group discussions. At the same

time, the school administrator underwent a critical informant interview because there was only one English Department Head per public high school.

Thematic analysis was deemed the most appropriate way of analyzing the data since it aims to understand the collection of experiences on the collaboration and challenges of the stakeholders during blended learning. According to Kiger and Vapio (2022), thematic analysis attempts to comprehend a collection of experiences, opinions, or behaviors within a data set. Figure 2 summarizes the research activities.
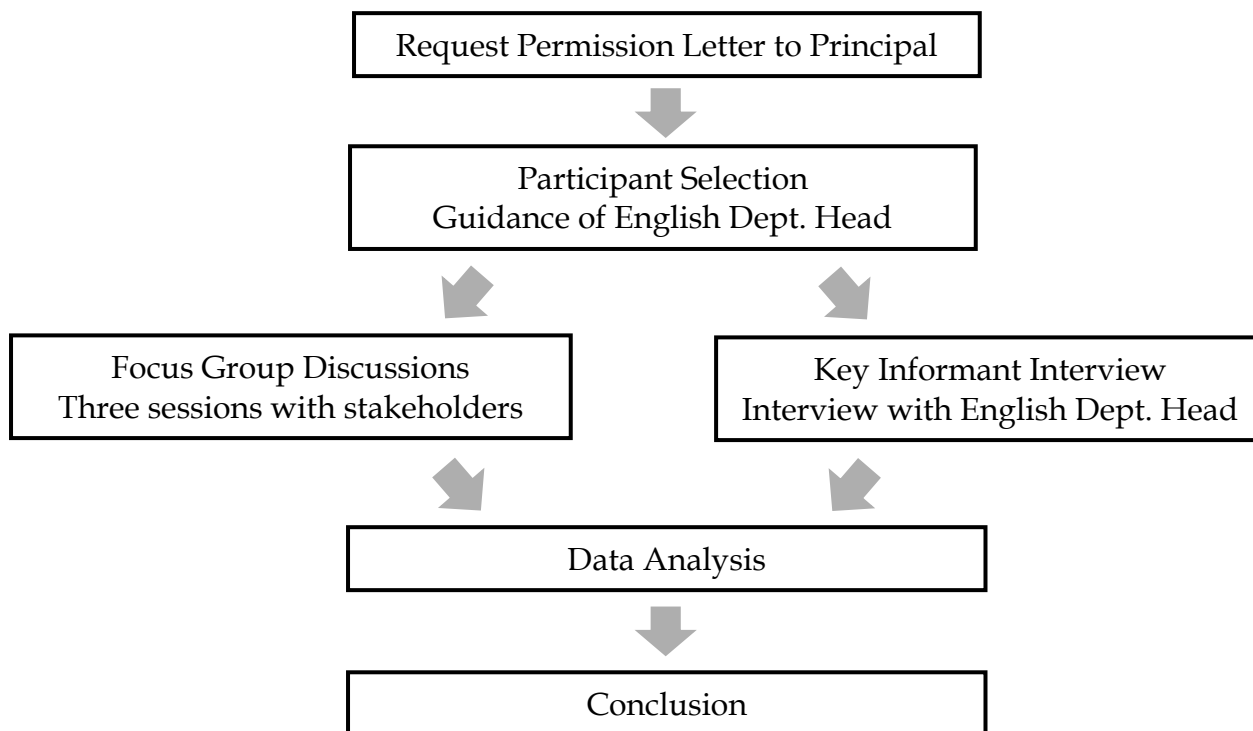
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│   Request Permission Letter to Principal │
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│         Participant Selection            │
│      Guidance of English Dept. Head      │
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│ Focus Group        │  │ Key Informant Interview│
│ Discussions        │  │ Interview with English │
│ Three sessions     │  │ Dept. Head             │
│ with stakeholders  │  │                        │
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│               Conclusion                 │
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Figure 2. Summary of research activities.

The accuracy and consistency of the data collection methods, including focus group discussions and a critical informant interview, are essential in guaranteeing the strength and trustworthiness of the results. This set of tools works better because the semi-structured questionnaire was carefully assembled. It was based on Wang et al.'s (2015) CABLS framework and the semi-structured interview guide created by Mcgee and Poojary (2020). This foundation's use of proven frameworks guarantees the questions are pertinent and thorough, addressing the intricacies inherent in a blended learning setting. This technique ensures the validity of the study's content by thoroughly examining all relevant aspects of blended learning from the viewpoints of many stakeholders. Applying the interview and discussion protocols consistently is how qualitative research, such as this one, achieves reliability. The study employs a standardized protocol to limit variability that could result from variations in data collection methods. This involves conducting all interviews in person, using a structured yet adaptable guide, and ensuring the sessions adhere to a specific duration range. Additionally, employing audio recordings for all interviews guarantees the precise capture of data and enables subsequent analysis, bolstering the data's dependability.

Furthermore, the involvement of the key informant, who holds the position of head of the English department, enhances the data by providing detailed and precise

information. This includes insights into teaching practices and administrative support systems impacting blended learning. By carefully selecting a highly knowledgeable participant who satisfies the criteria set by Cossham and Johanson (2018), the construct validity of the study is enhanced. This ensures that the information collected is strongly connected to the practical aspects of the school's blended learning environment. The utilization of the triangulation procedure reinforces the credibility of the conclusions. The study enhances the overall credibility and depth of the analysis by integrating data from various focus groups and a key informant, which allows for cross-validation of different opinions. This rigorous methodology enables the researcher to thoroughly comprehend blended learning experiences, encompassing stakeholders' individual and collective viewpoints.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
The shared experiences of the stakeholders in blended learning led to the creation of three major themes, each of which has its sub-themes. The major themes are the factors that encouraged stakeholder collaboration, challenges in stakeholder collaboration, and solutions to collaboration challenges. The factors that encouraged the collaboration of the stakeholders include the technology training conducted by the school support staff or the ICT teachers, the utilization of communication channels such as Facebook Messenger and Google Meet, the collaborative efforts done by the English department, the school administrator's class monitoring, and the assistance and support provided by the Department of Education. However, challenges were encountered while working together, including internet connectivity issues, heavy workloads, a lack of gadgets, seasoned teachers needing help adapting to the blended learning modality, and limited interaction during face-to-face classes. The solutions implemented to address these collaboration challenges comprised the provision of internet connectivity assistance by the Department of Education, adjusting workloads, promoting teamwork, and capacitating seasoned teachers. Table 1 shows the summary of findings.

Table 1. Summary of findings.

Major Themes	Sub-Themes
Factors that Encourage Stakeholder Collaboration	Technology Training by the School Support Staff
	Utilization of Communication Channels
	Collaborative Management of the English Department
	School Administrator's Class Monitoring
	Assistance and Support from the Department of Education
Challenges in Stakeholder Collaboration	Internet Connectivity Issues
	Heavy workload
	Lack of Gadgets
	Seasoned Teachers' Difficulties to Adapt
	Limited Interaction during Limited Face-to-Face Classes
Solutions to Collaboration Challenges	Provision of Modules and Internet Connectivity Assistance
	Adjustment of Loads & Teamwork
	Retooling Seasoned Teachers

Discussion
Theme one: Factors that encourage stakeholder collaboration

This central theme analyzed how the stakeholders could collaborate through the blended learning modality. The stakeholders discussed how and when they interacted with one another and how they aided fellow stakeholders in conducting their roles and responsibilities with the blended learning modality.

Technology Training by the School Support Staff

The school support staff or the ICT teachers conducted a one-week training for all English teachers and school administrators, including the head of the English department, to give them the knowledge and abilities they need to use online tools and applications during the blended learning modality. They received training on using Google Suite, a collection of applications developed by Google, so they have the materials needed to teach their learners even in an online setting.

The school support staff's technology training was crucial to raising stakeholders' awareness of the workings of such applications. This was among the several challenges faced by teachers during the blended learning modality; thus, Alvarez (2020) noted that not all teachers can adapt to blended learning due to their lack of ICT expertise. Moreover, with the training of the school support staff, they were able to equip the other stakeholders with the knowledge and skills to use technology, which is essential for their collaboration. The English teachers and school administrators created a new learning environment for the learners to conduct creative and collaborative activities they could enjoy online. The technology training also encouraged collaboration among the stakeholders upon discovering that learning those tools is easier if they learn from each other.

Utilization of Communication Channels

The main communication channels used by the stakeholders to interact and collaborate during blended learning were group chats on Facebook Messenger and Google Meet. Given this situation, the Facebook Messenger group chat allowed them to contact one another and to work together during mutually convenient times and locations. It was a conduit for communication that they could use to keep in touch with other stakeholders whenever and wherever they were for collaboration and assistance in accomplishing their tasks. This was proven in the study of Johler (2022), which stated that according to the teacher participants, digital technologies are helpful for communication and collaboration. The same is true for Challob et al. (2016): The students' cooperative efforts, supported by online tools like Viber, helped them improve their writing abilities.

Moreover, according to Tang and Hew (2022), Facebook Messenger is among the most popular mobile instant messaging (MIM) apps. MIM was believed to eliminate traditional face-to-face meetings' time and space restrictions, enabling people to stay connected. Additionally, due to its versatility and adaptability, MIM promotes learning by fostering resource sharing and remote collaboration. MIM can better encourage communication and the emergence of interpersonal bonds. Thus, based on the stakeholders' sentiments, they communicated most of their concerns through group chats, which were addressed accordingly. Likewise, Suana et al. (2019) said that MIM is a valuable tool for promoting online learning because it offers simple and practical features for group learning. MIM makes uploading and downloading pictures and

videos more straightforward, especially for people with slow internet connections. MIM is more advised when installing a blended learning system than a traditional LMS, particularly for teaching higher-order thinking skills or in locations with poor internet access.

Google Meet, on the other hand, was the other central platform for communication among the stakeholders aside from the Department of Education instructing them to use the applications under the Google Suite. Google Meet allowed the stakeholders to communicate effectively, regardless of geographical distance. Pedroso et al. (2022) discussed this in a study and stated that Google Meet is among the best user-friendly videoconferencing platforms. It is an easy-to-use application with a private setting that makes starting meetings quick and easy. Participants can join Google meetings by simply clicking the meeting link that the host provides in their web browser. Google Meet also enables listeners and lecturers to converse about a subject matter and clarify anything unclear, which is excellent for knowledge construction (Setyawan et al., 2020).

Collaborative Management of the English Department
The English Department has been holding programs and activities that aim to improve learners' proficiency in the English language, even through the blended learning modality. They were able to conduct culminating activities that they had been doing even prior to the pandemic and continued celebrating National Reading and Book Month every month of November. The culminating activity was said to provide learners with the avenue to apply what they have learned from the lessons in their English subject.

The collaboration of the stakeholders made it possible for the culminating activities and the celebration of National Reading and Book Month, which the English Department has embodied and promoted. The English Department collaborated closely to plan and organize the events. They had online meetings where they established committees and maintained strong communication through the previously mentioned communication channels. The teachers also helped and collaborated with learners to prepare for the events. The English department also collaborated with the school support staff for live streaming from Google Meet, where the events had to be conducted so that other people could also watch the learners' performances through the school's Facebook page. Web tarpaulins and PowerPoint presentations were made possible during the events.

With the collaborative management of the English department, collaboration with the other stakeholders also manifested and prevailed to assist in conducting and turning the events into a success. This department's working strategy allowed the group of stakeholders to work hand in hand, providing the learners with a great learning experience even in a blended learning modality and also supporting the learners to meet learning outcomes successfully. Collaborative management enables many stakeholders to work together to increase the efficiency of the teaching-learning process. Mcgee and Poojary (2020) added that collaboration between the faculty members and school support staff was essential in promoting learners' academic success. This cooperative strategy guarantees a well-developed blended learning environment and a satisfying academic experience. Collaboration among stakeholders for feedback and decision-making was necessary. Therefore, strong collaboration and interaction among teachers, ongoing feedback from learners, and activity observation should be actively implemented (Mielikäinen, 2022) in various school-related activities.

School Administrator's Class Monitoring
One of the duties of the English Department head is to supervise and monitor the learners and teachers. Thus, no alterations were made during the blended learning modality. It was noted that the department heads attended online classes and monitored and made observations. To evaluate and assess teachers ' performance, they must conduct two monitoring activities per teacher every school year during the blended learning modality. The second goal is to monitor the learners during their online classes. They needed to monitor and note the learners' attendance and check if they could keep up with their lessons online.

However, because the school administrator's main objective in the observations is to supervise the teachers and students, the collaboration primarily involves them, the English teachers, and the students. However, the observations also involved the school support staff because the other stakeholders will most likely need their assistance when the school administrator notices issues with the technology and applications during the online classes. The school support staff mentioned that they continued assisting all the stakeholders until the limited face-to-face classes, so even though the stakeholders did not express this directly, it did likely happen.

Assistance and Support from the Department of Education
The Department of Education is a government agency overseeing and managing the Philippine Basic Education System. For students to realize their full potential, it oversees the primary and secondary school systems and offers them quality basic education (Department of Education, 2021). During and even prior to the blended learning modality, the DepEd developed several programs and offered instructional and tangible support to public schools, including the Los Baños National High School, to meet the needs and address the concerns of the stakeholders with this setup. This course of action was also seen as one of the factors that prompted the stakeholders' collaboration to teach the English subject using the mentioned modality.

There has been a program of DepEd that emphasized strengthening the technological capacity of teachers and students. Thus, the DepEd gave laptops and tablets to the teachers and learners. The DepEd also collaborated with Google and Microsoft to regularly offer software content and skills to its stakeholders for teaching (Department of Education, 2022). Hence, the stakeholders were able to utilize the G Suite applications. Moreover, the Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) that teachers and learners utilized during modular distance learning are from DepEd. In an article by DepEd (2020), former DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones said that the SLMs and the other alternative learning delivery modalities are in place to accommodate the needs, circumstances, and resources of every student and will cover all the necessary ground to ensure that primary education will be available during the COVID-19 pandemic. The SLMs were distributed to schools in printed form. Going back to the first subtheme, technology training by the school support staff, these were carried out because DepEd trained the school support staff. The school support staff claimed that the Laguna Department of Education Division Office had first trained them.

The DepEd provided the stakeholders with resources and other support to work together to operate the blended learning modality. This support was specifically helpful for learners who did not have any gadgets to use for learning and communicating with other stakeholders. The teachers were given SIM cards to address their struggles with

weak internet connections. The laptops were also helpful for the school administrators and the ICT coordinator since they were said to have high-end specs to enhance the working process and ensure the smooth operation of blended learning with other stakeholders. However, the stakeholders also declared that this support needed to be improved, and they encountered different challenges that will be tackled in the next theme.

Theme two: Challenges in stakeholder collaboration
Since the blended learning modality was employed in their school, the stakeholders have encountered challenges and difficulties impacting their ability to work collectively.

Internet Connectivity Issues
Internet connectivity was the biggest technological challenge during the blended learning modality. Indeed, with the shared experiences of the stakeholders on blended learning modality, this was the most mentioned challenge they encountered. The learners pointed out that not all of them could attend online classes consistently due to a loss of internet access at home or a poor internet connection. Their English teachers were not spared from this challenge, too. Some did not even have access to the internet for some time due to problems with internet providers. There were instances that either the learners or teachers were kicked out of Google Meet during the discussions, classes were frequently interrupted, and these caused some of the learners to miss their lessons.

As a result, the DepEd created a program that allows teachers to purchase data or internet connectivity plans and eventually have their expenses reimbursed with proof of purchase. They must have receipts upon purchase of the mentioned plans so that they can submit for audit and refund. The school administrator, however, admitted this as one of their difficulties during blended learning because some teachers still needed to receive complete reimbursements due to incomplete receipts. The teachers who kept all their purchase receipts received a full refund for the money they spent, the others who could not do so only received a partial refund, and some still needed a refund due to the non-availability of receipts. No solution was made for the teachers who did not have receipts, and this matter was left unresolved.

The stakeholders needed help to properly fulfill their roles in the modality operation, primarily due to the challenge of slow internet connectivity. This challenge is rooted in the need for more support for the stakeholders, specifically the teachers, during blended learning. According to Hussain et al. (2019), institutional support is necessary to promote dedication, enhance teacher competence, and improve student learning outcomes. In addition, Groen et al. (2020) noted that the institution's goals for implementing blended learning and the availability of suitable infrastructure and technology significantly impacted the rate at which faculty members embraced it. To build and maintain a blended learning program among faculty members and learners, committed institutional support is necessary, including instructional and technological proficiency resources.

Heavy Workload
Another prevalent issue that the stakeholders had to deal with was a heavy workload. The English teachers admitted that they had given the learners many tasks during the first year of operating blended learning in their school. Also, blended learning has been

complex for learners because they have many group projects online, and they must contact their inactive groupmates since there were learners who rarely participated in group activities.

The English teachers also complained about the amount of work they had during blended learning. This is because they held online classes and monitored the learners during modular distance learning. They also stated that they worked nearly around the clock during blended learning because they conducted meetings in the evening and responded to learners' inquiries throughout the night. They also had to prepare for their demonstration teachings, which involved the school administrator's teacher and class monitoring.

They were moving on to the school support staff, who were also overworked during blended learning because they were responsible for regularly instructing and helping the educators and other stakeholders on issues relating to applications, technology, and devices. They had to deal with students, teachers, and school administrators. Their work also continued after conducting the technology training for the teachers. They continuously answered the stakeholders' questions through their group chat. They also stated that they only sought the assistance of the district ICT coordinator if they could not resolve issues with the applications despite their best efforts.

The school administrator also said that they all worked continuously during blended learning, including the school principal, because they also assisted in providing answers to queries from both teachers and students. The DepEd officials were also asking them for reports even at night. They also underwent training not only in technology training by the school support staff but also in the I-D-E-A Lesson Exemplar, which is done to prepare for blended learning and to cater to diverse types of learners (Del Pilar & Andal, 2020). In order to better prepare them for adopting the new modality, they also attended webinars by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The English teachers who could not teach online for personal reasons and technical difficulties were substituted.

Ma'arop & Embi (2016), as well as Phillips et al. (2016), have mentioned in their articles that a heavy workload is one of the challenges that teachers have identified during blended learning because they had to devote additional time to redesigning modules, getting the materials ready for upload, managing student requirements, and rating their online work. These were evident in the experiences of the English teachers. Also, in the case of the other stakeholders, they have devoted additional time to accomplishing all their responsibilities during the said modality. The heavy workload of the stakeholders also affected their collaboration because Zydziunaite et al. (2020) discovered that the time teachers allocate to collaboration with colleagues and students is linked with their workload; if teachers are overloaded with work, they will undoubtedly find it difficult to work correctly with their co-teachers and their students, which could lead to additional difficulties. A heavy workload can also lead to burnout, resulting in stakeholders needing help communicating with each other.

Lack of Gadgets
The stakeholders also noted the challenge of the lack of gadgets. It has already been mentioned that regular teachers were not provided tablets by the DepEd, only the learners. They were also not given laptops; they were only given to the ICT coordinators. The school administrator also said the teachers purchased all the gadgets they needed for blended learning. The laptops of the teachers and even the school

support staff were said to be different from other online applications and programs, making their work more difficult. Lastly, the computer units in the laboratory also needed to work correctly during the limited face-to-face classes. The teachers must have used these units to conduct online classes on the school premises.

The need for appropriate gadgets has been a challenge in blended learning, according to Mobo et al. (2022). This suggests that the teachers experienced difficulties executing their responsibilities while employing the blended learning approach because they were not given all the needed resources, and this issue was not addressed. Also, this challenge may impede their collaboration with other stakeholders, especially during the first months of the operation of blended learning, because not all of them have the necessary gadgets to use. There may have been numerous instances of their laptops not functioning correctly due to the applications and programs they had installed, which could have impacted other stakeholders, such as during the planning and execution of the English Department's event.

Seasoned Teachers' Difficulties to Adapt
According to the stakeholders, the difficulties of the seasoned teachers in adapting to blended learning and the materials used to conduct the modality were also challenges. Seasoned teachers are experienced teachers who have been teaching for almost ten years (Villon et al., 2022). They are called veteran teachers.

School support staff stressed that they needed help teaching them with the applications and other online materials they thought would be needed to ease their teaching process during blended learning. This was a result of the fear of the seasoned teachers of technology. The English department head asserted that these teachers were reluctant to inquire about the applications if they had questions in mind and that they thought it was a waste of time to master those online tools. So, seasoned English teachers could assist the learners with their modules only during the first year of blended learning instead of teaching online.

In the study of Samifanni and Gummanit (2021), elderly teachers find online learning challenging because they perceive it as a puzzle after spending their entire careers using textbooks and chalkboards. Before the pandemic shook the academic world, teaching was not this complicated for these elderly teachers. However, when online learning came, everything became a problem for them to solve. Also, the elderly teachers had much trouble using online learning platforms and software because they had difficulties following instructions. Furthermore, the seasoned teachers can also be a problem that the stakeholders encounter when working together because the school support staff needs to make time for them and adjust their pacing so that they can follow the lessons during the technology training. As previously mentioned, there have been times when these seasoned teachers' technical difficulties forced the suspension of meetings between English teachers and school administrators. These seasoned teachers also encountered technical issues during classes and struggled with other online applications, making it difficult for the students to learn from them.

Limited Interaction during Limited Face-to-Face Classes
The challenges experienced during online and modular distance learning were comparable to those observed during restricted in-person training. Despite the restricted availability of in-person classes, learners persisted with modular distance

learning, thereby still encountering the deficiencies of the modules. However, a concern not seen by other parties involved but acknowledged by the school officials was the restricted level of engagement during these in-person meetings. Learners were mandated to abstain from engaging in group activities and to consistently adhere to social distancing measures due to the potential dangers of virus transmission (Bordeos et al., 2022). The imposition of this limitation caused them to experience a sense of isolation, similar to what they encountered during their online classes, due to their inability to interact with one another physically.

In addition, implementing government-mandated health and safety regulations to prevent a revival of COVID-19 made collaboration difficult for learners and other stakeholders during the restricted face-to-face lessons. Tagare (2023) emphasized that the constraints of face-to-face classes with limited interaction presented challenges for participants, mainly when they needed to cooperate or engage in group work while adhering to physical distancing measures. Similarly, Bordeos et al. (2022) observed that the requirement to uphold social distance hindered participants from participating in collective endeavors. The lack of ability to engage in collaborative learning, an important teaching method, weakened the social and cognitive processes that usually occur among students. This limitation likely resulted in dissatisfaction among other parties involved because they could not participate in their typical in-person activities, impeding their ability to collaborate and work together effectively.

Theme three: Solutions to collaboration challenges
This theme highlights that despite the collaborative challenges encountered by the stakeholders, some solutions were also implemented to address them.

Provision of Internet Connectivity Assistance
To address the difficulties encountered by students with limited internet access, English instructors supplied educational resources and physical study materials, which were disseminated to students, parents, or guardians directly or through local government authorities (Pe et al., 2020). This measure ensured that students who could not attend online classes could still engage in their teachings and activities. In addition, teachers disseminated these lessons using Google Classroom and occasionally via Facebook Messenger group chats. As a final option for individuals lacking internet connectivity, educators also made contact through mobile devices. Even with these steps, the SIM cards and data loads provided to instructors to mitigate connectivity problems were frequently inadequate (Bayron, 2023). Based on their findings on student internet connectivity in the new normal, Asio et al. (2021) highlighted that available services must assist stakeholders in implementing adaptable online learning. They also emphasized the urgent requirement for enhancements in IT infrastructure to facilitate adaptable instruction and uninterrupted learning. Moreover, providing Wi-Fi and sufficient data to stakeholders, particularly those residing in rural locations with limited network coverage, would significantly improve their access to education.

Adjustment of Loads & Teamwork
Lessening the number of tasks for the students was the action that the English teachers imposed with their heavy workload. They adjusted the number of tasks the learners needed to complete because they discerned that they were under pressure during blended learning, considering that they had to study roughly eight subjects. They also

pictured the stress the learners would feel if each subject had the exact requirements for the students to complete. One learner said that there were teachers who allowed them to submit their requirements before the quarter ended. It has become apparent that teachers need to be more lenient regarding submitting the requirements of the students and have even been instructed by the DepEd not to provide students with failing grades (Santiago et al., 2021).

However, the teachers received no assistance in performing their duties other than the suggestion of the Department of Education that the school follow academic guidelines. Consequently, the only solution that school support staff have come up with to handle their responsibilities was to create nine teams to conduct the technology, so they have more workforce to answer the queries of the teachers and students about the applications. The division office and school principal permitted them to create the teams. As a means of achieving balance, organizations are increasingly turning to using teams. Teams are groups of two or more people who work together in a dynamic, interdependent, and adaptive manner to achieve a common objective, with each member having a distinct responsibility within the team's framework. The prevalence of teams within organizations is partly a result of the complex issues that organizations frequently face and the synergistic benefits that teams can provide to organizations, such as the capacity to complete tasks that are impossible for one person to complete alone (Shuffler et al., 2018).

Retooling Seasoned Teachers

During the second year of blended learning, the English department head already gave the seasoned teachers an online teaching load so they would be forced to learn how to give lectures virtually. To do so, the school support staff and the other English teachers helped them explore the online applications.

Villon et al. (2022) and Ngao et al. (2022) found that seasoned educators are capable of operating basic hardware, are slightly capable of applying and seeking personal ICT use, and are relatively capable of using ICT for instruction. The ability of seasoned teachers to use technology effectively is a crucial aspect of the new normal. It suggests that seasoned educators are more than prepared. However, to be prepared and equipped, they must maintain and supplement their knowledge with fresh knowledge and expertise in using digital resources. Hence, administrators should regularly train seasoned teachers in using technology because the education landscape is continuously and quickly evolving.

CONCLUSIONS

Fundamental Finding: While there are factors that encourage stakeholder collaboration, and some efforts were made to address the challenges they have encountered, collaborative solutions still need to be implemented uniformly. This study highlights the need for enhanced stakeholder collaboration to address challenges encountered in blended learning effectively. **Implication:** This study contributes to the existing knowledge on blended learning by examining stakeholder collaboration and challenges encountered in teaching English. It emphasizes the need for a collaborative approach to address the complexities of blended learning and suggests potential strategies to enhance stakeholder collaboration. By fostering a collaborative environment, stakeholders can work together to overcome challenges, optimize the benefits of blended learning, and create a compelling and engaging learning experience for all learners. **Limitation:** This study is only limited to the experiences of stakeholders

involved in teaching the English subject through the blended learning modality. The study's findings need to be more generalizable to stakeholders teaching other subjects or involved in blended learning in a different context. Another limitation of this study is that only one school administrator participated because of the school's structural policy of one head per department. The school principal's academic commitments restricted broader administrative insights. Master teachers and ICT coordinators are not regarded as school administrators. Finally, the use of qualitative research design also limits the study. Qualitative research designs are limited in generalizing findings to a larger population. **Future Research:** The study's limitations indicate opportunities for future studies in other school settings and among various stakeholders involved in other subjects or blended learning contexts.

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*Danica Jae B. Sagun (Corresponding Author)
Department of Human and Family Development Studies, College of Human Ecology,
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College, Laguna, 4031, Philippines
Email: dbsagun@up.edu.ph

Greg T. Pawilen, PhD
Department of Human and Family Development Studies, College of Human Ecology,
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College, Laguna 4031, Philippines
Email: gtpawilen@up.edu.ph

Sarah Jen C. Paccarangan, MPAf
Department of Human and Family Development Studies, College of Human Ecology,
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College, Laguna, 4031, Philippines
Email: scpaccarangan@up.edu.ph

Rufo Gil Z. Albor, PhD
Department of Human and Family Development Studies, College of Human Ecology,
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College, Laguna, 4031, Philippines
Email: rzalbor@up.edu.ph

Hanna L. Patindol, MPAf
Department of Human and Family Development Studies, College of Human Ecology,
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College, Laguna, 4031, Philippines
Email: hlpatindol@up.edu.ph

Phrygian P. Almeda, LPT
Department of Human and Family Development Studies, College of Human Ecology,
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College, Laguna, 4031, Philippines
Email: ppalmeda2@up.edu.ph

Daisy V. Pelegrina
Department of Human and Family Development Studies, College of Human Ecology,
University of the Philippines Los Baños
College, Laguna 4031, Philippines
Email: dvpelegrina@up.edu.ph