

Readiness of Public-School Teachers for Emergency Remote Teaching

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Abstract

Emergency remote teaching placed public-school teachers inside a delivery system that was being assembled while it was already in use. This integrative review distinguishes teacher readiness from simple confidence with technology. Readiness is treated as a chain of five capacities: dependable access, instructional redesign, assessment judgment, learner contact, and organizational support. Literature and policy documents available through 2021 were read comparatively, with attention to the difference between planned online learning and temporary emergency provision. The review finds that individual competence can be neutralized by unstable connectivity, unclear school routines, excessive preparation demands, or the absence of workable low-technology alternatives. It proposes a school readiness dashboard and a staged professional-learning model organized around recurring teaching decisions rather than isolated software training. The article offers an analytic framework, not prevalence estimates or evidence of causal impact.

Keywords: emergency remote teaching; teacher readiness; public schools; instructional adaptation; Philippines

Introduction

When schools closed, teachers were asked to preserve continuity without the preparation time, infrastructure, and learner contact that ordinarily support instructional change. Calling this situation online learning obscures an important distinction. Online learning is designed for a mediated environment; emergency remote teaching is a temporary response to disruption (Hodges et al., 2020). The relevant question is therefore not whether teachers were generally willing to use technology, but whether they could make sound teaching decisions under constrained and changing conditions.

Readiness is often measured as possession of devices, digital literacy, or self-reported confidence. Each matters, but none is sufficient. A teacher may know how to operate a learning platform and still be unable to reach learners who share a phone. Another may prepare excellent printed activities yet receive completed work too late to correct misconceptions. Readiness resides partly in the teacher and partly in the school arrangements that make teaching possible.

Purpose of the Article

This review asks three questions: Which capacities were repeatedly required during emergency remote teaching? Where did individual readiness depend on organizational conditions? What school-level actions could improve readiness without assuming continuous broadband access?

Conceptual Approach

Design and Source Base

The article uses an integrative review rather than a systematic effectiveness review. Sources were selected for conceptual relevance to emergency remote teaching, teacher professional learning, Philippine learning-continuity policy, and early pandemic experience through December 2021. Policy documents were read as statements of expected practice, not as proof that implementation was uniform. Empirical studies were interpreted within their populations and settings; findings from higher education or other countries were used to illuminate mechanisms, not to estimate conditions in every Philippine public school.

Analysis followed a decision-centered logic. Evidence was coded according to decisions teachers had to make: how to reach learners, reduce and sequence content, explain tasks without live interaction, obtain evidence of learning, respond to nonparticipation, and manage workload. These decisions were then mapped to resources controlled by the teacher, the school, the household, or the wider system. This procedure produced the five-capacity readiness chain below.

The Teacher Readiness Chain

The Five-Capacity Readiness Chain

Access capacity. Readiness begins with a dependable route to learners, but access is not synonymous with ownership of a smartphone. Signal quality, data cost, electricity, printing, transport, shared-device schedules, and the timing of household work determine whether contact can be sustained. A school should therefore map actual communication routes by learner rather than classify an entire class as online or modular.

Design capacity. Emergency teaching requires selection, not mere transfer. Teachers must identify essential competencies, divide work into manageable units, make directions interpretable without immediate explanation, and build recovery opportunities into the sequence. Training that concentrates on platform buttons leaves these design decisions untouched. UNESCO guidance emphasized matching distance-learning solutions to local infrastructure and supporting teachers pedagogically as well as technically.

Assessment capacity. Submitted work does not automatically reveal independent learning. Teachers need several low-burden signals: short explanations in a learner's own words, worked examples, oral checks when feasible, and feedback that arrives before the next dependent task. DepEd's interim assessment guidance recognized the need to adjust assessment and grading during the continuity period. The professional judgment involved is central to readiness.

Contact capacity. Learner silence has several possible meanings: lost connectivity, unclear instructions, care work, illness, fear of failure, or disengagement. A ready teacher has a feasible protocol for distinguishing these possibilities without treating every nonresponse as misconduct. This requires updated contact records, escalation routes, and cooperation with advisers, school heads, parents, and community partners.

Support capacity. The final link is organizational. Common templates, protected planning time, peer review, technical assistance, realistic reporting requirements, and clear decision rights reduce avoidable cognitive load. Studies of teachers during the pandemic show that adaptation depended on professional competence and available opportunities to learn, but also on school context and support (König et al., 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020).

Readiness Is a Chain, Not a Score

The five capacities are sequentially dependent. Strong content knowledge cannot compensate for a broken contact channel; reliable contact cannot compensate for incomprehensible tasks; well-designed tasks lose value when feedback arrives after a unit has ended. An average readiness score can hide a critical failure in one link. Schools should therefore look for the weakest link rather than reward a high total.

This chain perspective also changes responsibility. A device shortage is not corrected by motivational seminars. Excessive module-writing demands are not corrected by asking teachers to become more resilient. Conversely, school support cannot eliminate the need for teachers to exercise judgment. Improvement requires a negotiated division of work: the system supplies minimum conditions and common resources, while teachers adapt instruction and document what learners need next.

A Practical School Dashboard

A useful dashboard records conditions that can trigger action. It need not rank teachers. For each class or grade level, the school can monitor the proportion of learners with a confirmed contact route, the delay between task distribution and feedback, unresolved noncontact cases, teacher preparation hours, and the availability of alternative formats. Short qualitative notes should explain anomalies that counts cannot capture.

Professional learning should follow the same decision cycle. First, teachers diagnose a recurring instructional problem. Second, colleagues examine a small set of learner work or contact records. Third, they test one adjustment, such as a shorter instruction block or an oral verification prompt. Fourth, they review the result at the next learning action cell. This is more likely to transfer into practice than a sequence of unrelated webinars.

School heads should also establish a stop-doing list. Every emergency requirement consumes time that might otherwise be used for feedback and learner contact. Reports without a clear decision use, duplicated encoding, and repeated reformatting should be suspended or consolidated. Workload is not a side issue; it affects the reliability of every other link in the chain.

Table 1*Decision-centered readiness dashboard*

Capacity	Diagnostic question	Evidence for action
Access	Can each learner receive and return work through a confirmed route?	Contact map; unresolved cases
Design	Can the task be understood without immediate teacher explanation?	Task review; learner questions
Assessment	Does evidence show what the learner can do independently?	Work sample; oral or written check
Contact	Is silence investigated through a humane escalation process?	Contact log; referral status
Support	Do school routines protect time for design and feedback?	Workload log; available assistance

Note. The table is an analytic tool proposed in this article; it does not report field measurements.

Discussion

Teacher readiness should be assessed close to the work. Evidence may include a sample learning sequence, the clarity of instructions, the accessibility of materials, turnaround time for feedback, and the handling of an unreachable learner. Self-report surveys can complement this evidence but should not stand alone.

Scope and Research Agenda

This review does not calculate how ready Philippine teachers were, nor does it compare divisions. Its source selection was purposive and no formal risk-of-bias score was applied. Early pandemic studies frequently relied on convenience samples and captured conditions during rapid change. The proposed chain must therefore be tested and adapted locally.

Conclusion

The central conclusion is straightforward: readiness is not a personal trait that teachers either possess or lack. It is the capacity to keep a sequence of instructional decisions functioning despite disruption. Schools improve that capacity when they protect time, simplify routines, provide multiple delivery routes, and turn learner evidence into timely support.

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