



Bridging Gaps in Learning: Instructional Continuity Practices of Teacher Coaches through Customized Learning Opportunities

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Abstract

This study examined the level of customized learning continuity practices used by teacher-coaches during their absence. Employing a descriptive method, the findings showed that practices were "Almost Always" commendable, with an overall weighted mean of 3.85. The most effective practice was the provision of clear instructions in SLMs/LASs (Mean: 4.43), along with strong utilization of digital tools for remote tracking and communication. Conversely, practices requiring physical presence, such as classroom visitation (3.25) and conducting tutorials (3.58), were less consistently implemented. It is recommended that educational leaders establish structured systems for substitute collaboration and implement flexible tutorial arrangements. These steps will help address the challenges of physical absence and further elevate the impact of the coaches' instructional support.

Keywords: Customized Learning Opportunities, Instructional Continuity Practices, Teacher-Coaches

1. Introduction

In many public schools across the Philippines and around the world, teachers often take on dual roles as classroom educators and sports coaches. These teacher-coaches are tasked not only with shaping minds in the classroom but also with developing athletes' skills, discipline, and character through intensive training and competition. Their responsibilities extend beyond instruction they serve as planners, motivators, mentors, and leaders, especially during sports seasons. However, balancing these dual responsibilities presents a unique challenge: ensuring that students, especially non-athletes, continue to receive quality instruction even when the teacher-coach is away from class. In areas like Agusan del Sur, particularly in schools such as Ticgon and Sabang Adgawan Elementary Schools, which regularly send athletes to regional and national events, administrators and stakeholders have voiced concerns about the impact of prolonged teacher absences on instructional continuity and student performance.

Numerous studies emphasize the critical role of teacher presence in promoting student achievement and maintaining classroom engagement. According to Alave and Ancho (2023) ^[1] Teacher-coaches do more than develop athletic potential; they shape students' values, resilience, and motivation. Similarly, Pestaño *et al.* (2025) ^[9] highlight that coaching contributes significantly to learners' holistic growth. Yet, when teacher-coaches are frequently pulled from classrooms for training or competitions, non-athlete students may experience diminished learning opportunities and reduced teacher engagement. Reupert *et al.* (2023) ^[10] found that disruptions to regular instruction, especially in resource-limited schools, are linked to increased academic lags. Additionally, Lee and Martinez (2021) ^[6] argue that the absence of teachers during critical instructional moments hinders lesson continuity and weakens formative feedback, thereby affecting long-term comprehension.

Despite these insights, research specifically exploring how teacher-coaches manage instructional continuity, particularly in the Philippine public-school context remains limited. While much of the existing literature centers on the impact of coaching on athlete performance or the motivational influence of teacher-coaches, very few studies address the instructional strategies employed to sustain learning for the broader student population during sports seasons. In regions with a shortage of teaching personnel and limited access to qualified substitutes, the instructional gap widens when coaches are called for extended training

or competition duties. The policies intended to address this issue, such as Agusan del Sur Division's Memorandum No. 684, s. 2024 ("No Disruption of Classes Policy"), is helpful but under-evaluated in terms of implementation and impact. This study responds to that gap by exploring how teacher-coaches implement instructional continuity practices through customized learning opportunities to ensure that student learning persists despite their physical absence from the classroom. It focuses on public elementary schools in Agusan del Sur that are regularly engaged in regional and national sporting events. The study seeks to surface adaptive practices such as the development of context-responsive learning activity sheets, digital and peer-supported learning, and coordination with substitute teachers. The findings aim to provide schools with practical and evidence-based recommendations for supporting teacher-coaches such as institutionalizing substitute systems, enhancing professional collaboration, and designing learning resources aligned with the needs of both athlete and non-athlete learners. Ultimately, the study aspires to contribute to a more inclusive and resilient approach to teaching and learning amidst competing educational roles.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Role Strain Theory and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), both of which provide meaningful lenses to understand the dual responsibilities of teacher-coaches and the effects on learners' academic performance.

Role Strain Theory, introduced by Goode (1960), highlights the psychological and practical stress individuals face when navigating multiple and sometimes conflicting roles. For teacher-coaches, the dual demand of fulfilling classroom teaching duties while simultaneously managing sports coaching responsibilities often leads to compromised instructional delivery. In the context of public schools in Agusan del Sur, where limited staffing resources make it difficult to designate substitute teachers, this role conflict becomes more pronounced. Teacher-coaches are frequently compelled to prioritize athletic commitments during training and competitions, resulting in disrupted classroom routines and reduced learning opportunities for non-athlete students. This study draws on Role Strain Theory to explain how teacher-coaches' competing responsibilities create a tension that affects their ability to sustain instructional continuity. By examining the coping strategies and instructional practices they adopt, the study sheds light on how teacher-coaches attempt to minimize the academic risks posed by such strain through customized learning opportunities like modular lessons, digital platforms, and peer support mechanisms.

On the other hand, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), emphasizes three fundamental psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness that drive students' motivation and academic engagement. Disruptions caused by teacher absences can weaken these pillars: learners may feel less autonomous when instructions are unclear, less competent when they cannot complete tasks independently, and less connected when teacher presence and feedback are irregular. These motivational setbacks can lead to disengagement and declining performance. Anchoring this study on SDT helps explain the learner-centered implications of instructional disruptions and underscores the importance of providing customized, clear, and accessible learning resources that

maintain students' sense of competence and autonomy even in the teacher's absence. Customized learning opportunities such as well-structured LAS, timely feedback via mobile platforms, and collaboration with substitute teachers are therefore not only stop-gap measures but also intentional strategies to sustain student motivation and performance in alignment with SDT.

Together, Role Strain Theory and Self-Determination Theory provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the challenges and adaptive practices of teacher-coaches. Role Strain Theory contextualizes the external pressures and institutional limitations that teacher-coaches experience, while SDT explains the internal motivational needs of learners that must be safeguarded amidst instructional disruptions. By grounding this study in both perspectives, it becomes possible to bridge the understanding of how teacher-coaches balance competing roles and how customized learning strategies can mitigate negative impacts on learners' engagement and achievement. This dual-theoretical foundation ensures that the study not only captures the struggles of teacher-coaches but also emphasizes the importance of sustaining learners' motivation and academic growth, thereby justifying its focus on bridging gaps in learning through instructional continuity practices.

3. Problem Formulation

This study sought to examine how teacher-coaches sustain instructional continuity through customized learning opportunities while fulfilling their dual roles as educators and sports mentors. Specifically, it explored the extent to which teacher-coaches prepare learning activity sheets or modules, provide clear instructions, monitor student progress, use online platforms, conduct tutorials, and collaborate with substitutes to ensure that learning is not disrupted during sports training and competitions. It also aimed to identify the challenges they encounter in balancing their responsibilities and the strategies they employ to minimize learning gaps. In light of these concerns, the central problem addressed in this study was: How do teacher-coaches bridge gaps in learning through instructional continuity practices anchored on customized learning opportunities?

4. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to the continuing discourse on educational equity, particularly in contexts where teachers are tasked with multiple responsibilities. For students, the study underscores how effective continuity practices can protect their academic progress despite their teacher's absence due to coaching duties. For teacher-coaches, the findings provide practical insights into strategies that can help them balance instructional and athletic commitments without compromising either responsibility. School administrators may find the results useful in formulating mechanisms that support continuity, such as scheduling adjustments, substitute teacher arrangements, or the development of digital and modular resources. On a broader level, the study contributes to policy-making by reinforcing the need for measures like DepEd's "No Disruption of Classes Policy," ensuring that the pursuit of athletic excellence does not come at the expense of academic achievement. Ultimately, the study benefits future researchers by offering empirical evidence and contextual insights into the understudied intersection of teaching and coaching roles in Philippine public schools.

5. Scope and Limitations

This study was conducted in selected public schools in Agusan del Sur that actively participate in sports competitions at the district, regional, and national levels. It focused on teacher-coaches who simultaneously manage classroom instruction and athletic coaching responsibilities. The investigation was limited to instructional continuity practices, specifically the preparation of learning materials, monitoring of learners' progress, integration of technology, collaboration with colleagues, and provision of customized support to students during the teacher's absence. While the findings offer a valuable perspective on how learning gaps are addressed through these practices, the study was limited to one division and to one academic year, which may affect its generalizability to other contexts. Furthermore, the data relied primarily on self-reported practices, which may be influenced by personal biases and situational constraints. Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into the adaptive strategies of teacher-coaches and offers practical recommendations for sustaining learning in schools where teachers face the dual demands of instruction

6. Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive research design to examine the instructional continuity practices of teacher-coaches and substitute instructors, student academic performance, and teacher-coach satisfaction, alongside the challenges faced by coaches. The research was conducted in selected public and private elementary schools across the 13 municipalities of Agusan del Sur, chosen due to the high prevalence of teachers serving dual roles. The total population, recruited through purposive sampling, included 71 participants: 53 teacher-

coaches and 18 substitute teachers.

Data were collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire, which was validated by three field experts and demonstrated excellent internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The data gathering procedure involved obtaining formal authorization and administering the validated surveys via Google Forms, with confidentiality ensured.

For statistical analysis, Mean and Standard Deviation were the primary tools used to summarize responses and quantify the extent or level of each instructional continuity practice, measure learners' performance for the first quarter, and assess teachers' gratification levels. The Mean was thus the central measure used for the interpretation of the results regarding these variables. Frequency and Percentage were used to count and present the most reported challenges faced by teacher-coaches.

7. Results and Discussion

Results

The overall weighted mean of 3.85 with a standard deviation of 1.073 indicates that teacher coaches "Almost Always" demonstrate commendable instructional continuity practices in terms of providing customized learning opportunities even while fulfilling their coaching duties. This reveals a strong commitment to ensuring that learners experience minimal instructional disruption despite the physical absence of their regular classroom teacher. Among the ten indicators, the highest-rated practice is the provision of clear instructions in self-learning modules (SLMs) or Learning Activity Sheets (LAS), garnering a mean score of 4.43.

Table 1: Level of instructional continuity practices among teacher coaches in terms of customized learning opportunities

Indicators	Wtd Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. I prepare self-learning modules (SLMs) or Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) to ensure instructional continuity while I am on coaching duty.	4.32	0.976	Almost Always	Commendable
2. I provide clear instructions in my modules or LAS to help learners complete their tasks independently.	4.43	0.694	Almost Always	Commendable
3. I follow up with learners or parents to monitor progress.	4.26	0.964	Almost Always	Commendable
4. I follow up with learners or parents to address learning challenges during my absence.				
5. I track my learners' performance from a distance through text messages, chats, classes, or other digital forms.	4.28	1.007	Almost Always	Commendable
6. I utilize online platforms (e.g., Google Classroom, Messenger, etc.) to provide guidance or post learning materials and update during the quarterly meeting.	4.26	1.022	Almost Always	Commendable
7. I conduct online or face-to-face tutorials (when possible) to reinforce learners learning.	3.58	1.379	Almost Always	Commendable
8. I visit classroom (if time permits) to observe learners' performance and provide support.	3.25	1.440	Sometimes	Moderately Commendable
9. I collaborate with substitute teacher or colleagues to ensure learning objectives are met while I'm away.	3.79	1.081	Almost Always	Commendable
10. I modify my instructional materials based on learners' feedback and observed learning gaps.	3.94	1.151	Almost Always	Commendable
11. I evaluate effectiveness of my customized learning strategies on learners' performance during disrupted instruction.	3.89	1.121	Almost Always	Commendable
Overall Weighted Mean	3.85	1.073	Almost Always	Commendable

Legend: 1.00-1.49-Never/Very poor; 1.50-2.49-Rarely/Poor; 2.50-3.49-Sometimes/Moderately commendable; 3.50-4.49-Almost Always/Commendable; 4.50-5.00-Always/Very commendable

Discussion

This suggests that coaches intentionally design materials that empower learners to independently navigate their tasks, a critical feature of self-paced learning environments. According to Capuno and Tumanut (2023) ^[2] clear

instructional design not only improves learners' task completion rates but also promotes self-regulated learning, particularly in remote or modular contexts. This is reinforced by findings from Domingo and Castroverde (2021) ^[4], who noted that effective modular instruction depends heavily on

the clarity and accessibility of learning tasks. Additionally, the high means recorded for remote performance tracking (4.28), utilization of online platforms (4.26), and consistent communication with learners and parents (4.26) affirm that teacher coaches are leveraging digital tools and communication strategies to sustain learner engagement and feedback even in their absence. This aligns with the findings of Silao and Mercado (2023) ^[11], who emphasized the usefulness of mobile-based monitoring in bridging the distance between teachers and learners. The regular use of platforms such as Google Classroom, Messenger, and other digital channels also mirrors the blended learning competencies emphasized by Magulod (2022) ^[8], who stressed that digital fluency among teachers enables meaningful learner support even during asynchronous periods.

However, despite these commendable efforts, the indicator with the lowest mean score of 3.25 relates to the limited classroom visitation of teacher coaches to observe learner performance, which is only rated as “Sometimes” and interpreted as “Moderately Commendable.” This suggests that time constraints, workload, or logistical limitations may hinder coaches from physically checking in on learners. While this is understandable, the absence of occasional in-person observation may reduce the teacher’s ability to provide immediate support, feedback, and socio-emotional reassurance elements vital to learners’ holistic development. A study by Gonzales and Pablico (2022) ^[5] confirms that even brief classroom presence by the primary or substitute teacher fosters learner accountability and trust, especially in modular setups. Similarly, the relatively lower mean for conducting online or face-to-face tutorials (3.58) implies that while tutorials are integrated into the instructional plan, they may not be done regularly due to limitations in connectivity, schedules, or learner availability. This echoes Lomibao’s (2021) ^[7] findings that, despite the acknowledged benefits of tutorials in mitigating learning loss, many learners, particularly in rural or underserved areas, face barriers to accessing synchronous reinforcement sessions.

The moderately high ratings for collaboration with substitute teachers (3.79), feedback-informed instructional modifications (3.94), and evaluation of customized strategies (3.89) indicate that coaches are making significant efforts to ensure learning continuity through adaptive and reflective practices. These results are promising and show that instructional continuity is not limited to content delivery, but also involves coordination, learner tracking, and post-delivery reflection. The implication is that teacher coaches are not merely managing absence but are intentionally designing their departure to ensure sustained learner progress, personalized support, and alignment to learning standards. Moving forward, educational leaders may consider creating structured systems for substitute-teacher onboarding, flexible tutorial arrangements, and time allocations that allow coaches to occasionally reconnect with their learners. Moreover, capacity-building workshops on digital instruction and learner analytics may further empower teacher coaches to fine-tune their customized learning approaches.

In sum, the findings present a commendable portrayal of teacher coaches’ efforts to maintain instructional continuity through customized learning. The data affirms that coaches are proactive in providing clear, self-directed learning materials and utilizing digital tools for communication and

tracking. While physical presence remains a challenge, the strong commitment to learner progress and engagement is evident. These insights suggest that with supportive policies, targeted training, and institutional collaboration, teacher coaches can further elevate the impact of their customized instructional practices in the evolving landscape of flexible and hybrid education.

8. Conclusion

The study concluded that teacher-coaches exhibit a commendable level of customized learning continuity practices, particularly in developing and delivering clear instructional materials and maintaining learner engagement through digital means. However, practices that require the teacher’s physical presence and tutorial support present a clear opportunity for growth, especially through collaborative and flexible arrangements. To strengthen these areas, the following are recommended: developing short, guided videos or audio lessons embedded in Learning Activity Sheets (LASs) to support independent learning, establishing co-teaching partnerships with assigned substitutes to better maintain instructional rhythm, and utilizing responsive feedback loops to collect learner insights and update materials promptly. Overall, these findings underscore the need for policy and leadership to provide sustained professional development and context-responsive instructional design, a call that is being echoed throughout the Philippine education sector.

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