

Teachers' Experiences in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning

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ABSTRACT:The continuity of learning in this time of pandemic brought challenges to many countries. This so called "Education in the New Normal" brought new teaching experiences for teachers. This study aimed to narrate the teachers' experiences in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning. Findings revealed that teachers in Modular Distance Learning performs a variety of function such as preparing and distributing modules, tracking learner's progress and doing a lot of paper works and need upskilling to manage this learning modality. Teachers adjust in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning through adjusting their new routine. Monitoring and evaluating learner's progress and delivering quality instruction are the difficulties that teachers experienced in shifting from face-to-face into Modular Distance Learning and the key factors that challenged the implementation of Modular Distance Learning are the availability of quality resource materials and attainment of learning competencies. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends simplification of modules and provide and deliver adequate supply of ready-made modules on time. There is a need to strengthen the communication between teachers, parents and learners.

KEYWORDS –*Experiences, Modular Distance Learning, Modules, Pandemic, Teachers,*

I. INTRODUCTION

The world has still been dealing with corona virus disease (COVID19) and schools were closed for face-to-face classes. Thus, education is one of the areas heavily affected. The mandatory use of distance technology in the educational process has changed people's perception of education. The study of Kalimullina et. al (2021) concluded that while there are enormous opportunities, applications, and automated digital environments in the world, none of them can function without the supervision or instruction of a supervisor or instructor, to a greater or lesser extent.

To make sure that learning remains unhampered in the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order No. 012 s. 2020 or the Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for school year 2020-2021 in the Light of COVID-19 Public Health Emergency that emphasizes learning opportunities to students provided through blended distance learning modalities to avoid face-to-face interactions.

Teachers faced difficulties as a result of the abrupt transition from face-to-face learning to distance learning. Teachers in public schools were tasked with developing modules for students and attending capacity building webinars to keep their skills up to date.

Despite the pandemic, teachers adapt to new situations and continue to provide high-quality education. Uy (2020) stated in her article "Blended Learning" In Virus-Hit Philippines that one of the possible challenges for teachers is dealing with an increased cognitive load, as well as a vertical and high-ceilinged learning curve, particularly for teachers who are unfamiliar with blended learning. This could be more difficult for teachers.

Teachers take the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners. The learners may ask assistance from the teacher via e-mail, telephone, text message/instant messaging among others (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020). They also do home visits to learners needing remediation or assistance. This could be very risky for teachers especially in this time of pandemic.

This study fills in this gap, what is the current situation of teachers in the implementation of new normal education with Modular Distance Learning as modality. The study of Castroverde & Acala (2021) identify the challenges of teachers in the use of Modular Distance Learning Modality amidst pandemic and how the teachers cope up with the challenges. The present study would narrate the experiences of teachers in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning. It focuses on describing the teacher in Modular Distance Learning, the adjustment and difficulties they experienced and the key factors that challenge the implementation of the modality.

Given these challenges, constraints and uncertainties, it is worthwhile to study the experiences of teachers in the Modular Distance Learning to provide baseline data that may use in ensuring a nurturing and safe environment to continue achieving the quality education even amidst the pandemic.

II. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative narrative research design was used to understand the meanings that teachers constructed about their experiences in Modular Distance Learning. This design examine how stories were told to understand how participants perceive and make sense of their experiences. It provides an opportunity to the researcher to access the personal experiences of the participant, the story teller. They speak and declare life as experiences in narrative form. Thus, the researcher has an opportunity to study the subject in their natural setting and understand the behavior, action, and feelings in a whole content. Narrative research has been used in educational practices especially in exploring experiences of teachers and students lives (Elci&Devran, 2014).

The respondents of the study were the 23 teachers of Rofulo M. Landa High School who were a teacher-adviser for school year 2020-2021, can provide in-depth descriptions about the topic and willing to take time to talk with the researcher about the topic. Creswell (1998) as cited in the study of Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young (2018), suggested a range between 20-30 interviews as a sample size guideline to be adequate.

Semi-structured interview was the instrument used in this study. Interview guide was prepared that describe the topic to be explored during the interview and while asking the participants on a conversational style, follow-up questions were asked because the researcher has the freedom to word the questions spontaneously and explore in more detail. Semi-structured interviews were distinguished by topic guides containing major questions that were used consistently in each interview. It was appropriate when the researcher already had a good understanding of what was going on in the sample in relation to the research topic (Bell, 2003).

Interviews were conducted with teachers who participated in this study in accordance with the principle of voluntariness. The interviews were recorded. The content analysis method was used to ensure a deep understanding of the data to be collected and to determine themes and dimensions not previously identified. Data analysis included four stages: Data coding, Identifying the themes, arrangement of the codes and themes, and identifying the findings and interpretation. The researcher prepared and organized the data and choose that truly fits in the study. The transcribed interviews were read and reread and listen to the recorded interviews and were culled for like phrases and themes that were then grouped to form clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2013). This is to get the sense of the whole. Through this process the researcher constructed the universal meaning of experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. The text was coded by the researcher using NVIVO software which the words, phrases or sentences that stand out as describing the experience under study or which express outright its meaning for the participant are extracted or highlighted.

According to Merriam (2002), as cited in the study of Strother (2013), a good qualitative study is one that has been conducted in an ethical manner. It was important to maintain a high ethical standard throughout the process. All participants were informed about the details of the study. Participation in the study was voluntary. An informed consent was given to participants asking them to read and sign before the interview started and would follow the no risk policy, meaning this study would not put anyone on any emotional or physical danger and follows the safety protocol. To ensure that all person who participated in this study have complete protection in privacy, no names of individual participants were used. Participant anonymity was guaranteed and was maintained throughout the interview process. The researcher assured the confidentiality of the respondents by assigning the respondents letters rather than their name.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In studying the experiences of teachers in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning, qualitative means of investigation were employed. Through interview, teachers' experiences in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning were identified. The perspective of the teachers regarding questions such as "What is it like to be a teacher in Modular Distance Learning?", "How do teachers adjust in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning?" "What are the difficulties that teachers experienced in shifting from face to face into Modular Distance Learning?" and "What are the key factors that challenge the implementation of Modular Distance Learning" serve as the basis for the thematic analysis of data.

3.1 The Teacher in Modular Distance Learning

The teacher respondents shared their experiences in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning. Table 1 presents the description of teachers in the Modular Distance Learning. Two themes were derived from the given responses.

Table 1
The Teacher in Modular Distance Learning

Theme	Category	Code
Perform a variety of function	track learner's progress	checks and records scores
		provides feedback
		communicating learners
		monitor learner's progress
	prepares and distribute learning materials	delivers unclaimed modules
		distributes and retrieved modules
		needs to print modules
		prepares self-learning modules
	workload and submission of reports	having difficulty in doing and submitting reports
		with overlapping tasks
teaching a new way		
Needs Upskilling	not fully prepared to teach in MDL	have very little readiness on modular distance learning
		still needs training
		search more techniques to cope up

This implies that being a teacher in Modular Distance Learning was not easy. Teachers carry out a variety of function...it was really a great responsibility. Most of the respondents described teaching as a challenging task. Modular Distance Learning is the most popular type of Distance Learning. It is the learning modality in most of the public schools in the country. Learners used self-learning modules. The production of learning materials requires a lot of work on the part of teachers... from the preparation to distribution. Teachers prepare self-learning modules. Teacher V said that:

At first, it was bit difficult. Especially for me because I am the one who prepares the module.

This finding supported the study of Dangle & Sumaoang (2020) that some teachers in some field responded that the central office does not provide modules for their respective subjects which include MAPEH and Journalism- Filipino. Thus, they are the ones making their own modules.

Teachers were also burdened in printing that it takes overnight to print modules. Teacher A said that:

Teachers work for 6 days and even 'till midnight in printing of modules.

Teacher W shared same sentiments.

Because you will experience that even at night, you're still printing, you're still sorting, your child wants to sleep, but you can't put him to sleep yet, because when you leave your work...tomorrow it will be distribution, it needs to be finished...it's like that way, you always seem have a quota to chase.

The study of Castroverde&Acala (2021) revealed that teachers' challenges in preparing the modules are related to the time, materials and supplies needed to prepare and print the modules. On the part of the teachers, it is difficult to print all the modules for the whole quarter because of insufficient time and assistance in printing all the modules.

Teachers were in the situation where they were unprepared and without enough training. Teachers in the Modular Distance Learning were not fully prepared in the said modality. Some of them were still struggling how to adjust to a new work environment. Teacher T stated that:

During the pandemic, teachers were prepared for Modular Distance Learning, but it is still not enough.

Teacher D added:

It is difficult to teach in a Modular Distance Learning set-up because I am not that ready.

Bagood (2020) as cited in the study conducted by Acala (2020), highlighted that teacher as front liners in the education level have undergone various trainings and seminars to be more equipped in delivering better education amid the COVID 19 pandemic as it is a norm of the department to train teachers not just for professional growth but to become ready for unexpected circumstances.

3.2 Adjustments in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning

Table 2 presents the adjustments of teachers in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning. From the given responses and codes, one theme was derived.

Table 2
Adjustments in the Modular Distance Learning

Theme	Category	Code
Adjustment in New Routine	production of learning materials	adjustment in crafting modules
		printing modules
		sorting and packing of modules for distribution
	required reports	checking of modules
		doing a lot of paper works
		having a lot of tasks to comply
	monitoring learners	having difficulty in accomplishing task
		adjustment in understanding learners
		communication to learners and parents
	time adjustment	adjustment in working hours
		having no time for personal lives
		working late at night
		lessen time for family
	resourcefulness	attending to webinars about different platforms
		spend time to find resources
having internet connection		
		used available resources

The Philippines was in the process of adapting to the new normal education. The shift to distance learning was not an easy task for teachers for they must adjust in their new roles as educators. Respondents claimed that they need to adjust their working hours. Teacher N said that:

Teacher's daily routines and busy days have become even more difficult to keep up with the fast flow of the system.

Teachers spend much time in the preparation of modules. Teacher L gave details how Modular Distance Learning affects her daily routine.

Modular Distance Learning affects my daily routine as a teacher by consuming a big amount of my time, from printing to sorting of modules, crafting an SLM, reminding my learners about their outputs, checking of retrieved outputs, updating my learners' records, creating summative test and performance tasks, doing a lot of paperwork and a lot more.

Teacher I also stated that:

Modular Distance Learning takes a lot of my time so there are some activities that I can no longer do because I have to prioritize preparing modules, mastery tests, performing tasks and many others.

Teacher B added:

In Modular Distance Learning, I need to go to school early and late going home. I need to sort and pack the modules for distribution and sort again after retrieval. I need to check the performance task given in the module and the mastery test for the computation of grades.

Additional to their role as facilitators of learning, teachers also need to do and submit reports. These were very stressful for teachers. Teacher R said:

Stressful and it's too tedious with a lot of paper works to be submitted.

There were also times that even they are at home, they still need to do a lot of paper works or reports. This is reflected in Teacher T's statement:

With a lot of paper works to be accomplished, there are times that even at home, teachers still do this paper works. A day is not enough to accomplish the task.

Much of the time, teachers provide feedbacks on student's outputs. Questions from students may appear at various times throughout the day, giving teachers difficulty in delegating time for each student and task. Teachers adjusted their time to respond on their learner's queries. Teacher H said that:

We adjusted our time by answering student questions even at night.

Teachers must assure there is open communication with the parents and students to continuously monitor and address their needs. But sometimes teachers failed to respond immediately, so they received feedback as if they are not doing their job. This was reflected to the statement of Teacher W as she shares her experience:

Students have queries, you need to respond immediately, because I experienced...we distributed modules on Thursday...On Sunday, the students asked...maybe that's the time when he answered the module in my subject. I did not respond right away. And then, the mother texted. Sometimes you will receive (message) as if you will feel like you are not doing your job. You can feel it the way they text.

Despite their busy schedule, teachers still find time to learn to cope up with the changes. Teacher K shared that he has been prepared to teach in Modular Teaching Learning through:

Reading articles on how to handle distance learning and participating to webinars.

Trainings are important for teacher to ensure that they are equipped and informed about the changes in the education set-up in the new normal. There was always a chance for teacher who have been resistant in using technology to facilitate their teaching by embracing new teaching practices. Teacher E said that:

Teachers adjust in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning by means of attending seminar that have something to do with different platforms that can be used in Modular Distance Learning like writing SLM.

Teachers were just like an ordinary person. They also have responsibilities as mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents. They have to deal with their individual lives and should took care of their kids. Since teaching was more than a job to every teacher, these roles were taken for granted. There were some instances that they don't have time even for their personal lives and for family. As stated by Teacher O:

We doubled and even triple our time to achieve the task for the day. There are some instances that we don't have time to our personal lives because most of our time is focused only on the preparation of modules and other reports.

Teacher F said that:

Even not working hour/office, you need to answer students/parent queries which really affects my time with my family.

Teachers experienced lack of rest and sleep. Teacher S said:

There is enough time to rest before, in Modular Distance Learning, there was almost no time to rest and lack of sleep. What we used to do during face to face is no longer the same as today. Almost every day, we mind of the modules.

Despite of so many adjustments, teachers learn to cope up. As stated by Teacher P:

It is a huge adjustment for us...teachers in the new normal set-up. Technically, it has a big difference in the old system. We have no choice but to embrace the new learning system.

Teacher Q cannot complain because adjusting was what the situation requires. With this, the participant added:

A lot of adjustments are done. Not an easy thing to do but then it is a must. I need to adapt myself on new normal situation,

Education in the new normal needs a lot of adjustments since teachers were not well-equipped when the pandemic came. Teachers were flexible enough to adapt to these changes. Modular Distance Learning became part of their daily lives. Teacher S said that:

Modular Distance Learning has become part of daily routine. I have adjusted every detail in distribution of modules.

It was also proved by Teacher J when he said:

When I describe my daily routine activities with Modular Distance Learning, I think it became part of my life.

3.3 Difficulties that Teachers Experienced in shifting from face-to-face into Modular Distance Learning

Table 3 shows the difficulties that teachers experienced in shifting from face-to-face into Modular Distance Learning. Two themes were derived from the given responses of the respondents.

Table 3
Difficulties of Teachers in Shifting from face-to-face into Modular Distance Learning

Theme	Category	Code
Monitoring and Evaluation	assessment	delayed submission of outputs
		students not getting their module

		students do not submit outputs	
		checking student's outputs	
		computing grades	
		students not answering the modules	
	cooperation of parents	limited time to communicate with parents and learners	
		parents answering the module	
		willingness of parents to claim modules	
Quality of instruction	availability of resources	availability of printed materials	
		lack of printing devices and materials	
		internet connection	
			lack of gadgets
	student's ability to learn	capacity of students to answer the modules	
		self-studying of students	
		student's mastery	

This pandemic was difficult on the part of the teachers, but they work hard to learn so they can cope up. They struggle with Modular Distance Learning specifically in evaluating students' learning. Some students did not get their modules. Teacher B stated:

Some of my students are not getting their modules in the time of distribution which makes me decide to deliver their modules in their home.

There were students who submit their outputs late or worst they did not even submit outputs. Teacher F stated:

It is hard to monitor student's progress. Some students did not return their modules. Teacher T said:

As a teacher, one of the problems I encountered with Modular Distance Learning is those students not answering their modules and not submitting their modules on time.

Teacher N added:

Releasing and retrieval of modules is one of the problems of distance learning. Retrieval is difficult that led to us teachers not able to compute their grades on time.

According to Fidalgo et.al (2020), the student's primary concerns regarding taking Distance Education includes time management and motivation.

It was seen in the study of Castroverde&Arcala (2021) that teachers' challenge in the distribution of modules were connected to late claiming of modules. There were students who claim the modules late than the scheduled time that became the reason why some students submit late outputs or even do not submit at all.

In the end, teachers accepted the fact that they need to understand their learners and still managed to motivate their students to submit their outputs. Teacher V shared:

The attitudes of the learner. They were also shocked from shifting from face to face to distance learning. It's hard to keep up with our students with what they want. Sometimes they can't submit their activities. It's up to us how we adjust to encourage them to do that (activities). They still need to continue their education.

COVID-19 pandemic raises numerous issues in the education sector. One of these is how teachers evaluate students if they are not sure who really answered the modules. No teacher can assess with certainty whether the task assigned to students was done by themselves or someone did it for them. Teacher L said:

The teacher cannot fully explain nor simply discuss the concepts to the learners. We cannot really assess nor evaluate the learning of the students because we are not sure if they are the ones who answered or produced the outputs. It is hard to provide updated feedbacks to the learners' outputs because some of them are hard to reach. There were struggles in terms of giving updated feedbacks to the learners regarding their performance because some learners and parents are not submitting the outputs on time. I cannot tell if I have evaluated my learners learning accurately because we are not sure who created their outputs.

The teachers think that students' answers in their modules have no validity, and most probably, mastery of the lessons is impossible to attain (Dangle &Sumaoang, 2020).

The study of Castroverde&Acala (2021) revealed that the validation of student’s learning is also difficult since their modules were answered by parents or tutors not the learners.

Similarly, teachers have a lot of catching up to do because they’re promoting students to the next level even though they’re unsure if their students actually learn (Magsambol, 2021).

From the distribution of modules to retrieval, teachers make sure that the quality of learning remains even with the absence of face-to-face interaction. Teachers have been finding ways to continue students’ learning process. But they admitted that imparting knowledge was difficult. Teacher T stated that:

From face-to-face into Modular Distance Learning, teachers have struggled a lot. One of these is that...if our students learn in this system of education.

When they were asked about the challengesthat they encountered in Modular Distance Learning, Teacher H answered:

Self-studying, poor internet connections, a greater number of output and students’ activities. Student did not learn well.

3.4 Key Factors that Challenge the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning

Table 4 presents the key factors that challenge the implementation of Modular Distance Learning. From the codes derived from the responses of participants, two themes were formed.

Table 4
Key Factors that Challenge the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning

Theme	Category	Code
Availability of Quality Resource Materials	production of resource materials	availability of electronic materials
		lack of printed modules
		lack of printing devices and materials
	crafting resources fits to learners	creating quality assured modules
		lack of time to answer all modules
		great number of activities
Attainment of Learning Competencies	capacity of parents	learners fail to submit modules
		educational attainment of household members
		parents lack of knowledge
	ability of learners	supervision of parents
		capacity of students to answer the modules
		lack of self motivation for learners
		struggling with self studying
	teacher’s connections	willingness of students
lack of guidance from teachers		
		lack of communications to learners and parents

Modular Distance Learning provides an exceptional learning opportunity as it allows flexibility in learning methods and materials. The availability of quality resource materials is one of the key factors that affects the implementation of Modular Distance Learning. One example is the great number of activities in modules. Teacher A stated:

Too much activities in each subject. Students should write directly in the modules to lessen their boredom in copying parts of the module.

When asked about the key factors that challenge the implementation of Modular Distance Learning, Teacher J answered:

Self-studying for students, poor internet connection/signal, lack of time and sleep, lack of time to answer all the modules due to number of activities and distractions...lack of focus.

Teacher N also answered:

Some students don’t find time to get their modules on time. Students return their outputs withoutanswers due to lack of study materials and access in the use of ICT.

The findings of the study conducted by Dangle & Sumaoang (2020), revealed that modules have a lot of exercise.

The availability of learning modules that suits to learner's capability is a great factor for the implementation of Modular Distance Learning. Teacher O stated:

Availability of references and compatibility of the modules with different capabilities of students. There were lots of disadvantages for all student's capabilities aren't the same.

Teacher U added:

For me, the challenges that I have observed that needs to be addressed are the resources in preparing modules. Proper trainings and seminars, it should also be aligned with the student's ability wherein he can easily understand or comprehend. Learning activities should be more specific and modified.

According to the study conducted by Lederman (2020), substantial resources and trainings are required to build interactive online courses. The consequences will almost certainly be decreased learning and increased inequity.

There a lot of factors that hinders the quality education in Modular Distance Learning. Teacher M said that:

Modular Distance Learning helps students to continue learning but it will not provide the quality of education they have needed.

Since education is no longer held within the school, parents serve as partners of teachers in education. Parents play a vital role as home facilitators. Their primary role in modular learning is to establish a connection and guide the child. With this modality, students were given self-learning modules for them to answer weekly with the help of their guardian or parents at home.

Teacher L also added:

The distance of the school from learners' home, the educational attainment of the members of the household where the learner is in and the readiness of not just teachers, but also the learners, parents and the rest of the community are the key factors that challenge the implementation of MDL.

The study of Dangle & Sumaoang (2020), revealed that parent's lack of knowledge to assist their child was a challenge in the Modular Distance Learning. Some parents didn't finish their studies.

There were students who can answer their modules independently. Some students were self-disciplined and have no problem with the independence, while others still need guidance. Teacher W stated:

If there is an assurance that students have learned...maybe...maybe they learned but then there are students who are still in need just like technologies...because there are students...whether we admit it or not, still have needs in reading proficiency, comprehension...just like that...so I think the effectiveness about the students learning.

The physical absence of the teacher means that they may not be available to guide the student when they need it most. In Modular Distance Learning, teachers only share materials to students without teaching it. This may affect the learnings of students.

Teacher C stated:

Parent's lack of knowledge to academically guide their children. Students lack interest in answering. They are not motivated in answering modules because of lack of guidance by the teacher.

One of the biggest challenges of Modular Distance Learning was meeting the needs of students. In the end, teachers hope that all things, with Modular Distance Learning turn out to be beneficial to students because teachers remained resilient and motivated despite such challenges. Cooperation between learners, parents and teachers was a key factor to achieve quality education. Teacher T stated:

In Modular Distance Learning, it is a big challenge for parents and teachers. To help the students, cooperation and collaboration between parents and teachers are needed.

Teacher S said:

It is a new normal education that must be adapt now adays. Both learners and teachers should perform their duties and responsibilities.

Teacher D shared his insights about Modular Distance Learning.

Modular Learning is good in blended/flexible learning if there are enough quality modules and have follow-up from teacher.

IV. CONCLUSION

Teachers in Modular Distance Learning prepares and distribute learning materials to learners. Aside from this, they also monitor the progress of their learners through text message or messenger. Even they were in the situation where they're not fully prepared, they always did their best for the learner's education. They still find time to learn to cope up with the changes. There is a need to train teachers on their role as educators in Modular Distance Learning as a new system of education.

The shift to distance learning was not an easy task for teachers for they must adjust in their new roles as educators. They spend much time in the preparation of modules. Most teachers were challenged by lack of

quality learning resources. It would be a great help for them if ready modules were delivered to schools on time. Simplification of learning modules is recommended.

This pandemic was difficult on the part of the teachers, they struggle with Modular Distance Learning specifically in evaluating students' learning and communicating learners and parents. Teachers have been finding ways to continue students' learning process but they admitted that imparting knowledge was difficult.

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