Issues and challenges in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning and Pupils' Achievements

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KeyWords

Modular Distance Learning, Academic Achievements, Issues and Challenges.

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to examine the current implementation of modular distance learning in Balubal Elementary School. Specifically, this study sought to determine issues and challenges in the implementation of modular distance learning and pupils' achievements. It employed a descriptive research design where the method included a quantitative approach to collecting data through survey questionnaires. The result revealed that the respondents rated always on the level of issues in the implementation of modular distance learning and rated always on the level of challenges in the implementation of modular distance learning. The majority of the pupil respondents were rated very satisfactory in their level of achievements; respondents' extent on issues and challenges of modular learning implementation denotes a moderate positive correlation to the level of pupils' achievements. It concluded that the level of issues and challenges of modular learning implementation and the pupils' achievements were correlated. Thus, it is recommended that the school shall implement a system awareness for the delivery and retrieval of modules to both parents and teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Printed Modular distance learning is the most prevalent and renowned teaching-learning approach and modality the Department of Education utilized in the new normal landscape because of the health and safety issues due to the dreaded Coronavirus or Covid-19 pandemic. The use of the modules in distant learning is linked to the idea of a flexible curriculum that provides teachers, students, parents, and school administrators with the framework to establish clear and realistic learning objectives. Module development stimulates practice to plan and develop the self-learning materials as well as to adapt a common framework for the design and development which are essential for teachers to be aware of concepts of deep and surface approaches to learning. The major consideration in module distant learning is to provide resources to teachers that will allow them to transform their classrooms into an active, student-centred learning environment. The module is a self-contained, independent instructional unit, systematically organized, well-defined, and has the means of evaluating pupils' work and activities.

Modular distance learning is learners' learning at their own pace, in their way, and using Self-Learning Modules (SLMs). It can be printed/digitized format/electronic copy that is appropriate to learners, and other learning resources like learners" materials, textbooks, activity sheets, study guides, and other learning materials (Llego,2020). Thus, to augment the needs of the pupils in relation that learning would continue, the Department of Education promulgated the use of modular printed materials. Modular Distance Learning (MDL) is significant for those learners who do not have internet connectivity. Saavedra (2020) espoused that teaching through modules is a self-learning activity for the students because they will be left individually on their own to work on one particular topic/unit. It could be utilized within any setting helpful to students and may be finished at their own particular pace but the teachers will check regularly their learning progress.

In the Printed Modular Learning Delivery modality, the teachers prepare the learning materials, weekly study guides and other resources for the modular distance learning and these materials shall be accompanied by quality assured instructional packets in which the parent/guardian/para-teacher meets with the teacher and receives instructions and learning materials to be completed by the learner for the week (Codamon, 2020). The success and effectiveness of distance learning depend on the study materials according to Jayaram and Dorababu (2020). Therefore, to cater to the needs and abilities of each student, DepEd focused on self-study modules as the main learning tool that can serve all students, which can be combined with other modalities of delivery learning that students have access to. To adjust self-study materials to the demands of learners, they must use numerous ways and channels of communication. Teachers and students are separated in distance learning, such as modular learning, so SLMs must act as teachers.

According to Nardo (2017), modules advocate self-directed learning. Using modules for learning leads to better self-study or learning skills among students. The concepts presented in the modules engross students in learning. Students develop a sense of responsibility as a result of the tasks they are given and they progressed on their own. They learn to learn; they are empowered. Conversely, the modular distant learning approach was started last July 21, 2020, by the Department of Education (DepEd) for the School Year 2020-2021 and the utilization of such packages considers individual differences and sanctions pupils to study and learn at their own pace and learn more on their style with or without parents' facilitation (DO 31.s.2020).

Various issues and Challenges have arisen as a result of abrupt changes in the school. The point at which an unresolved topic is ready for a resolution is defined as an issue. Additionally, an important subject that people are arguing about or discussing. However, challenges simply mean something new and difficult which is great effort and determination. Additionally, objection or query as to the truth of something, often with an implicit demand for proof.

Due to a lack of internet access, gadgets, and technologies, Balubal Elementary School has relied on Printed Modular Distance Learning (PMDL). In light of this, the researcher decided to conduct a study to investigate the issues and challenges of the printed modular distance learning mode.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The framework of the study is anchored in Department of Education (DepEd) Order Number 18, series of 2020 dated June 20, 2020, which provides the Policy Guidelines for the provision of learning resources in the implementation of the Basic Education learning continuity plan which emphasizes on the use of flexible and blended learning modalities that are responsive to the needs, contexts, and circumstances as well as the diversity of students. Moreover, the alternative modes of delivering learning were envisioned to reach all learners regardless of who and where they are. Distance learning, blended learning, and homeschooling were among the deployed learning delivery modalities (LDMs).

The Department of Education (DepEd) conducted Learning Enrolment and Survey Form (LESF) on school opening and it was found that Modular learning, is a form of distance learning that uses Self-Learning Modules (SLM) is highly convenient for most the typical Filipino students. It was also the most popular learning method among parents and guardians of their children. The SLM is based on the Department of Education's most essential learning competencies (MELCS). Subsequently, to make learning manageable for learners, they may be given a set time frame to undertake a lesson or accomplish an activity. The proposed time allocation for mastering a MELC should be used to set the time frame. Learners who are not meeting expectations shall be provided with remediation while those who may accomplish the tasks as contained in the SLMs shall be given enrichment activities.

Schools must guarantee that learning content is contextualized and integrated. Contextualization allows learning information and procedures to be tailored to a certain environment, circumstance, or application area, making competencies more relevant, meaningful, and valuable to all students (DO No.18, s. 2020). SLMs contain all of the materials needed to encourage autonomous study and learning. Distance learners have less touch with the institution or the teacher, and they rely largely on these carefully created teaching resources.

Methodology

A descriptive research design was used in the study. It is concerned with conditions and relationships that exist, opinions-held processes, and evident effects. It dealt with the relationship of the variables that had universal validity. This method is appropriate because the procedure includes observation and recording of events, so "it can provide a wealth of information about behavior, especially behaviors that would be difficult to study experimentally" (Smith, et al., 2016). Essentially, it discusses the interplay of the dependent and independent variables in the study. Data gathered and results were explained by the underlying concepts that can be related to each piece of information.

The adapted Saavedra questionnaire on Printed modular distance learning in Philippine public elementary schools in a time of COVID-19 pandemic: Quality, implementation, and challenges (2020) is employed as the main data gathering tool in identifying and establishing the relationships between and among the variables.

This study was conducted in Balubal Elementary School, East II District, Division of Cagayan de Oro City. It is the last part of Cagayan de Oro, it is bounded along Alae, Manolo Fortich and Agusan, Cagayan de Oro.The school comprises 1,106 and is officially enrolled pupils for the School Year 2020-2021 with the School Division Superintendent, School District Supervisor. The School is headed by one Elementary School Principal with one Master Teacher and 28 Teachers I-III. Thus, the school utilized printed modular distance learning as the Learning Delivery Modality. The pupils enrolled in the school are mostly coming from the different sitios of the said barangay. Most of them speak Visayan or Cebuano.

The respondents of the study were the Grade 1 pupils of Balubal Elementary School.

There were 160 respondents in the study. One hundred sixty (160) who were parent-respondents answered the survey questionnaire on the issues and challenges of modular distance learning. The respondents were purposively selected for the convenience of the researcher.

The research instrument was adapted and modified from Saavedra (2020) who conducted a study on issues and challenges of the implementation of modular distance learning and pupils' achievements.

The instrument is composed of two (2) major components, the first component is on the issues and challenges in the implementation of modular distance learning with five (5) indicators. The second component is on the pupils' achievements which were based on the pupils' grades which are categorized as Outstanding, Very Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Fairly Satisfactory, and Did not Meet Expectations (DO 31, s.2020).

Before the administration of the survey questionnaire, the researcher sought an approval to conduct the study from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Cagayan de Oro City with the recommendation of the School Principal and endorsements from the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School of Southern de Oro Philippines College.

After the approval was sought, the researcher administered the survey questionnaire to the parent respondents and retrieved it immediately after each respondent provided their responses to the survey item.

Subsequently, the responses of the respondents from the retrieved survey questionnaire were tallied, summarized, tabulated, and submitted to the statistician for appropriate statistical analysis. The following statistical techniques were utilized in the study:

Problem 1. Mean values and standard deviations were used to present the extent of the issues and challenges in modular distance learning.

Problem 2. Frequency counts and percentages were used to present the pupils' achievements.

Problem 3. Pearson-Product Moment Correlation was utilized to ascertain a significant relationship between the pupils' achievements and the extent of the issues and challenges of modular distance learning.

Results and Discussions

Problem 1. What is the level of the issues and challenges of modular distance learning in Balubal Elementary School?

Issues and challenges of modular distance learning, as used in this present study, are characterized as factors affecting learning performance in the new normal setting. These factors are assessed to achieve effective learning outcomes. Overall, the respondents rated **"Always"** with a mean of 3.43 (SD= .93). This result means that the issues towards the implementation of modular distance learning are Very High Implementation.It reveals that the teacher utilized Self-Learning Modules that caters the pupils' needs, wants, and interests. They ensured that the evaluation uses students who are familiar with the module's topic to avoid academic difficulties for the students. Teachers see to it that the assessment they are provided the is consistent and assesses what it claims to measure. Moreover, due to abrupt changes we can't avoid inaccuracies and glitches found in the module, especially during the reproduction of Self-Learning Materials. Insufficient for my teachers to check if the module has no technical errors due to many students and have no

assistance in printing all the modules.

Table 1

Issues of Modular Distance Learning

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1.Lesson contents are simplified to suit the learner's needs.	3.64	.71	Always	Very High Implementation
2.There were inaccuracies and glitches found in the modules.	3.38	.86	Always	Very High Implementation
3.Learning activities are contextualized to ensure pupils' engagement and participation.	3.24	1.21	Most of the time	High Implementation
4.Assessment tools measured mastery of learning.	3.49	1.02	Always	Very High Implementation
5. Pre and post-assessments are coherent and intelligible.	3.38	.86	Most of the Time	High Implementation
Overall	**3.43**	**.93**	**Always**	**Very High Implementation**

Note: 3.41-4.20 Very High Implementation; 2.61-3.40 High Implementation; 1.81 - 2.60 Low Implementation; 1.00 – 1.80 Very Low Implementation

There is a need for modification of the current system to address the foregoing issues and challenges. Modular distance learning is the use of modules made by teachers with different tasks and learning activities based on the Most Essential Learning Competencies (Anzaldo, 2021).

The indicator, **"Lesson contents are simplified to suit the learner's needs"** obtained the highest mean of 3.64 (SD= .71) which is verbally described as **"Always."** These indicate that in the utilization of self-learning modules, the respondents observed a very high of lesson contents that are simplified to suit the learner's needs. The result shows that the teacher monitored the students' progress regularly by checking the modules and evaluate their performance in each subject. Based on the information gathered, the teacher will decide to act on a specific area where the students require immediate assistance. While answering the modules, the teacher also communicates with the parents/guardians to inquire about their child's behavior. Furthermore, interacting with their parents allows the teacher to determine what interests them and how to make a difficult topic easier and simpler for them.

It is important to note that the teacher utilized modules that cater to the needs, wants, the interest of the pupils. Teachers also see to it that the modules created to suit the needs of the learners according to what is asked by Most Essential Learning Competencies as much as possible it must be localized according to what is seen in the locality (Aviles et al.,2020). In addition, it is suggested to capacitate the teachers' ability to organize the system and implement modular distance learning according to the needs and interests of the learners. Continuous innovations of educators and the active involvement of other stakeholders are the driving force for its success (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020).

Moreover, the lowest mean 3.24 (SD= 1.21) verbally described **"Learning activities are contextualized to ensure pupils' engagement and participation"**. This means that the contextualization of learning activities to ensure pupils' engagement and participation is high implementation. The teacher used an Individual Monitoring Plan to analyze the students' strengths and weaknesses before assigning them to Learning Activity Sheets that are engaging and encourage active participation. The Learning Activity Sheet (LAS) is self-directed instructional material aimed to guide the learners in accomplishing activities at their own pace and time using the contextualized resources in the community. This will also assist the learners in acquiring long learning skills, knowledge and, attitudes for productivity and employment.

Contextualized instruction, according to several studies, seamlessly connects the learning of foundational abilities with academic or occupational content by focusing teaching and learning on real applications in a specific environment that is of interest to the students. To put it another way, kids learn more effectively when they are exposed to lessons or topics with which they can identify or relate. Hence, the development of contextualized learning resources (Belgado,2020).

Table 2

Distribution of the Extent of Challenges of Modular Distance Learning

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. Teachers utilized self-learning modules readily available from DepEd.	3.65	0.82	Always	Very High Implementation
2. Self-learning modules are timely and regularly disturbed to parents.	3.28	1.15	Always	Very High Implementation
3. Appropriate and proper health and safety protocols are imposed during the distribution of self-learning modules.	3.49	1.02	Always	Very High Implementation
4. Retrieval schedules are properly communicated to parents.	3.49	1.02	Always	Very High Implementation
5. Retrieval system is utilized to avoid overcrowding.	2.97	1.24	Most of the time	High Implementation
Overall	**3.38**	**1.05**	**Always**	**Very High Implementation**

Note: 3.41-4.20 Very High Implementation; 2.61-3.40 High Implementation; 1.81 - 2.60
Low Implementation; 1.00 – 1.80 Very Low Implementation

Overall, the respondents rated **"Always"** with a mean of 3.38 (SD= 1.05). The result shows that the challenges towards the implementation of modular distance learning are very high implementation. Based on the results, the teacher follows IATF safety standards to prevent the viral spread of COVID-19. Prior to the implementation of Modular Distance Learning, the school head, teachers, and other stakeholders worked closely to plan how to make this modality a success. The School come up a Program entitled "Distance Learning Implementation Program: Kapit-bisig Para sa Bata at sa Bayan". This program aims to continue education amidst the pandemic. It consists of activities that will support and help the DepEd's efforts to ensure educational continuity.

In its commitment to ensuring teaching and learning continuity while looking after the health, safety, and well-being of its learners, teachers, and personnel, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order No. 012, s.2020 titled Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) for School Year 2020-2021 in light of Covid-19 Pandemic (DO 31, s. 2020).

The indicators, **"Teachers utilized self-learning modules readily available from DepEd"** obtained 3.65 (SD= .82) which was verbally described as **"Always."** These indicate that in the utilization of self-learning modules, the respondents observed it is readily available from DepEd. The teacher downloaded the modules from the link given by the Division Office. They will reproduce and use it as Self-Learning Materials. Given the fact that it has undergone validation, the learning materials are already standardized and appropriate to the learners' level of cognitive development.

Department of Education (DepEd) Order Number 18, series of 2020 dated June 20, 2020, which provides the Policy Guidelines for the provision of learning resources in the implementation of the Basic Education learning continuity plan which emphasizes the use of flexible and blended learning modalities that are responsive to the needs, contexts, and circumstances as well as the diversity of students. These policy guidelines aim to set the standards and specifications for the provision of learning resources in the implementation of the BE-LCP (DepEd2020). Modular Distance Learning (MDL) is tailored education that allows learners to use Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) that are centered on the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC), whether printed or in digital format provided by DepEd (Martinez, 2020).

Moreover, the lowest mean got 2.97 (SD= 1.24) verbally described most of the time retrieval system is utilized to avoid overcrowding. This means that the utilization of a retrieval system to prevent overcrowding is high in implementation. The teacher communicates with the parents/guardian prior to the retrieval of Self-Learning Materials via call and text and group chat through messenger. Outside the classroom, steps on the retrieval system were posted to guide them and minimize overcrowding. Safety protocols were observed during the retrieval of the module.

It is suggested to capacitate the teachers' ability to organize the system and implement modular distance learning. Continuous innovations of educators and the active involvement of other stakeholders are the driving force for its success (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020).

Problem 2. What is the level of pupils' achievements when categorized as: Outstanding; Very Satisfactory; Satisfactory; Fairly Satisfactory; and Did Not Meet Expectations?

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of the Level of Pupils' Achievements

Level of Pupils' Achievements	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding	26	16%
Very Satisfactory	79	49%
Satisfactory	47	30%
Fairly Satisfactory	8	5%
Did Not Meet Expectations	0	0%
Total	**160**	**100%**

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Result reveals that 79 (49%) respondents were rated very satisfactory in their level of achievements. This means that the majority of the pupils are doing very well in their learning activity, assessment, and other learning competencies. Parents scaffold their child during the teaching-learning process and actively engage in the distribution and retrieval of the module. Further, students passed their performance task which considered the highest percentage in the grading system. They also communicate the teacher if the topic is confusing and difficult for them to answer. In addition, the teacher also provides video lessons to help students understand the lesson, especially those hard topics.

Teachers are likewise encouraged to effectively apply teaching strategies through self-learning activities. Effective learning requires individual guidance, personal attention, and the overall individual efforts of the learners (Kanchan, 2016). Self-Learning Modules may prove to be a boon for students due to their enriched features. Aksan (2021), The study also revealed that students agreed on using the modular distance learning approach (MDLA) in Math has few challenges. It had also a positive effect on students' performance in which students performed very satisfactorily in Mathematics which means they had a good quality performance.

On the contrary, the lowest frequency of 8 (5%) denotes respondents who obtained a fairly satisfactory level of learning achievements. This result indicates that only a few of the pupils got an average level in their academic performance. It demonstrates that these respondents are individuals who did not do well in school. These students did not pass their modules on time and did not complete their performance tasks. Moreover, teachers are unable to communicate with these pupils because they lack the technology and live in a remote part of the barrio.

Teachers and other concerned individuals are advised to enhance the level of their guidance and facilitation of self-learning modules. Teachers and educational leaders have a profound and abiding duty to students when it comes to learning facilitation approaches. (Tovaglieri, 2022). Accordingly, the teacher as a facilitator is a concept that may be recent but has been needed for a long time.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between pupils' achievements and the extent of the issues and challenges in modular distance learning in Balubal Elementary School?

The pupils' achievements measure the amount of academic content the students learn. These can be evaluated from the respective learning objectives. On one hand, the extent of modular distance learning is carried through the utilization of all means made by teachers with different tasks and learning activities.

Table 4

Test of Relationship between the Level of Pupils' Achievements and Modular Learning

Respondents' Level on:	(r)	p-Value	Pupils' Achievements Interpretation	Decision on Ho1
Issues of Modular Learning	.49	<.00001	Moderate Positive Correlation	Rejected
Challenges of Modular Learning	.54	<.00001	Moderate Positive Correlation	Rejected

Note: α=0.05

The result of the test on the relationship between the level of modular learning and pupils' achievements. Result reveals that the respondents' level on issues of modular learning and pupils' achievements denotes Moderately Positively Correlated, *r* (160) =.49, *p*<.00001. This implies that the level of issues of modular learning has a significant relationship to the pupils' achievements. This means that the pupils' achievements are influenced by the issues in the implementation of modular learning. The learning content and

pedagogy should suit the learners because it affects the academic achievements of the pupils. Learning assessments that they give to the learners must be appropriate to the pupils and easy for them to answer. Furthermore, it is vital to keep track of the student's development and academic standing in order to resolve any problems that arise.

Kusmaryono et al., (2021), Modular Distance learning will be effective if it is well prepared, in terms of content, learning interaction models, learning media, communication strategies, and learning assessments. Moreover, if the learning materials do not hinder the studies of the learners and are accessible to everyone they can indeed provide equal opportunity. Therefore, it must be assured that learners be given materials equally and efficiently to make sure that no one is left behind and that there is equitable opportunity for everybody (Carreon, 2021).

Further, the results showed that the respondents' level of challenges of modular learning and pupils' achievements denotes Moderately Positively Correlated, r (160) =.54, $p<.00001$. This implies that the level of challenges of modular learning has a significant relationship to the pupils' achievements. This means that the pupils' achievements are influenced by the challenges in the implementation of modular learning.

It indicates that how Self-Learning Materials are distributed and retrieved has an impact on pupils' achievements. When parents do not receive the module, the student does not have access to the learning resources, as a result student will fall behind and they have to double time in order to catch up to the next set of modules. Thus, pupils become bored and lazy when responding their modules. In the face of the epidemic, parents and teachers must work together to provide high-quality education. The success of the said learning modality was aided by the collaboration of the people who took part.

The parents also play a big role as the channel of teachers in contacting the students. At this time of the pandemic, parents serve as the teachers' instrument in guiding the learners (Castroverde & Acala 2021). The teachers will provide resources to pupils which makes learning possible at home with parents as facilitators or tutors and the home environment transforms into a home learning environment. Teachers and other concerned individuals are advised to enhance the level of their guidance and facilitation of self-learning modules (Bernad ,2017).

Therefore, the results of this study implied that the null hypothesis was rejected as the respondents' level on issues and challenges of modular learning and the level of pupils' achievements were found to be correlated. According to Agarin (2021) in the study entitled the Challenges and Status of Modular Learning: Its Effect on Students' Academic Behavior and Performance. Based on the gathered data, the significant effect of challenges and status of modular learning on learners' academic behavior and performance rejected the null hypothesis "The challenges and status of modular learning have no significant effect on learners' academic behavior and performance". This implies that there is a significant effect between the Challenges and Status of Modular Learning on learners' academic behavior and performance. Students using the modular learning approach significantly increased their academic performance of the students.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, this study came up with the following conclusions:

1. The issues in the implementation of modular distance learning among grade one in terms of content and pedagogy got very high implementation. It can be concluded further that in the utilization of self-learning modules, the respondents observed a very high implementation of lesson content simplified to suit the learner's needs. Similarly, learning activities are contextualized to ensure pupils' engagement and participation got high implementation.

    Moreover, the challenges in the implementation of modular distance learning in terms of retrieval and distribution got very high implementation. It can be concluded further that in the utilization of self-learning modules, the respondents observed a very high implementation of utilizing self-learning modules readily available from DepEd. Contrarywise this, a retrieval system is utilized to avoid overcrowding is highly implemented.

2. Most of the pupils in Balubal Elementary School are doing very well in their learning activity, self-modular learning assessment, and other learning competencies. Contrarywise this, few of them got an average level of learning achievements.

3. This study concludes that the level of issues and challenges of modular learning implementation and the pupils' achievements were found to be correlated. Therefore, the pupils' achievements are influenced by the issues and challenges in the implementation of modular learning.

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