



Lived Experiences of Public Elementary School Teachers in Using Modular Approach: A Phenomenology

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Abstract:

The educators were the one who guided and teach the learners all aspects in human life, particularly the public elementary school teachers in which all the basic and fundamental lessons were teach. However, there were inevitable circumstances that made the teaching switch its mode and this is how this research conducted all about. The study explores the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in the selected school in Mandaue City division. This research study used a qualitative approach, applying Husserlian descriptive phenomenology. It used convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling, in choosing the informants to be the interviewees, with the self-made guide interview questionnaire through focus group discussion (FGD). The instruments used were first checked, reviewed, and validated by the three (3) experts to ensure the validity and quality of the questions formulated. The Colaizzi Phenomenological Data Analysis was applied to this study. Five (5) academic teachers were interviewed to identify factors affecting modular distribution and submission, their impacts, and modified strategies used by public elementary teachers. There are fifty-five (55) significant statements were given by the informants, three (3) formulated meanings, and eleven (11) sub-themes were created. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the responses that emerged during the study. It was revealed that the first formulated meaning discussed the lived experiences of the public elementary teachers using the modular approach. The second acquired meaning addressed the impact of modular learning on teachers. Lastly, it discussed the modified strategies used by the teachers in the modular approach. The study highlights the potential for enhancing teaching methods in public schools through the implementation of flexible systems, transparent communication, student-centered content, and effective time management. While acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the modular approach, it underscores the significance of valuing positive feedback from teachers, providing necessary support, acknowledging stress factors, fostering collaboration, implementing time management strategies, and regularly evaluating its efficacy.

Keywords: Lived Experiences, Modular Approach, Public Elementary School Teachers

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the Philippine public schools to adopt the "New Normal," primarily employing the modular approach to education, which involves breaking lessons into smaller, printable, or digital segments to ensure safety while maintaining educational standards. The study focused on the challenges teachers faced in implementing this method, including module distribution, retrieval, monitoring, evaluation, and the importance of parental support and teacher training. This research aimed to address knowledge gaps by exploring these specific hurdles and the strategies that teachers used to overcome them. By gathering this information, the study aimed to enhance teachers' adaptability and innovation in instruction, ultimately improving students' comprehension. It also aimed to provide a benchmark for all teachers in developing effective strategies within the modular approach, potentially elevating the overall quality of education in the New Normal setting.

Literature Review:

An instructional approach known as the "modular approach" divides lessons into smaller, easier-to manage parts or modules. The type of modular learning could be printed or digital. To continuously educate its students, the Philippine Department of Education approved modular-distance learning as the primary teaching method employed in public schools. Since the implementation of modular distance learning has proved to be the most popular learning method, according to a DepEd poll of 8.9 million parents (Bernardo, 2020). Moreover, as specified by Cabardo et al. (2022), teachers encountered numerous challenges and received feedback from the field, specifically related to the distribution, retrieval, monitoring, and evaluation aspects of using modular instruction. This revealed that teachers' challenges in modular distance learning include time-consuming, incomplete, and unanswered modules, inadequate parental support, and insufficient teacher training.

Research Method:





This study employed a qualitative approach, specifically utilizing Husserlian descriptive phenomenology research design, chosen for its suitability in exploring public elementary teachers' experiences with the modular system. Supported by relevant literature, the study aimed to delve deeply into teachers' perspectives, challenges, and experiences with modular distance learning. Public elementary school teachers were selected through convenience sampling, and data were gathered using a semi-structured interview guide questionnaire, validated by experts and pretested. The questionnaire covered three main areas: teachers' experiences with the modular approach, its impact on them, and the modified strategies they employed. Additionally, personal experiences were collected through unstructured interviews within a focus group discussion design. Colaizzi Phenomenological Data Analysis was utilized to analyze the data and draw conclusions, providing recommendations based on the findings.

Findings and Discussion:

This research study provided and analyzed the findings of the study with regards to the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers using a modular approach, its impact, and their modified strategies used. Through the utilization of the analysis of method known as thematic analysis, the researchers were able to recognize the overarching themes as well as the sub-themes that arose from the data gathered. The first theme was Module Distribution Factors, with its corresponding four subthemes namely; Parental Preferences: Printed and Online Modules for Learning, Hassle-free Modular Distribution, Effective Parent-Teacher Communication, and Late Module Retrieval Challenges. The second theme was about Impact of Modular Learning with the subthemes Retrieval Delay Affects Checking Process and Workload and Triggers Stress, Workload Impact in Making Assessment and Evaluation, and Closed Monitoring and Tracking. Lastly, the third themes was about Modified Strategies Used by the Public Elementary Teachers with four subthemes; Level-based Modules for Achievable Learning, Feedback via Various Channels, Modification and Simplification of Summative Assessment, and Efficient Time Management.

Theme 1: MODULE DISTRIBUTION FACTORS

The modular approach was a flexible way of distributing learning materials in the new standard setting. With the advancement of technology, different online platforms were used to communicate with other people. This was the time when creating group chats becomes trendy as a way for teachers and parents to easily communicate with each other and be updated in any events in school from time to time. The use of printed and online modules as parents' preferences vary depending on their personal preferences, circumstances, and access to technology.

Sub-Theme 1.1. Parental Preferences: Printed and Online Modules for Learning

"We have printed and online modules, but the majority chose printed because they don't have the resources they can use if they do online modules." - Knowledge Keeper (Line No. 1)

Majority of the parents decided to have printed modules for easy and convenient use. Those few parents who preferred to have an online module were depending on the availability of the resources they had and used at home. This fitted to the statement given by Knowledge Keeper (Informant 1) who said that many parents chose printed modules rather than online or soft copy of modules due to the reason of lack of resources at home. According to Bernardos' (2020) study, modular distance learning has been adopted by all public schools in the Philippines as a primary modality. This decision was influenced by a survey conducted by the Department of Education (DepEd), revealing that parents with enrolled children expressed a strong preference for learning through printed and digital modules. This preference was particularly significant in areas where internet access for online is limited.

Sub-Theme 1.2. Hassle-free Modular Distribution

"The flow of distributing the module here in the school is smooth because there are barangay tanod and other teachers that will guide the way to entrance and exit." -Knowledge Keeper (Line No. 2-4)

The public elementary teachers with the help of the staff and the local community volunteers lead the successful implementation of this one-way system, as these were few of the statement mentioned by Informant 1. This concludes that the distribution of printed modules in the school has been smooth so far with the help of guidance and assistance from barangay officials, teachers, and school staff.

Sub-Theme 1.3. Effective Parent-Teacher Communication

"There is no problem because all my students are printed. Then we also have GC if ever there are announcement or follow up for the children and some are just text messages only." -Mentor Maverick (Line No. 97-99)

The Informant 5 (Mentor Maverick) discussed about group chat (GC) that involves parents and students and noted that some students were texted directly for announcements or follow-ups, while others received printed materials and used the GC for communication. With this being said, teachers were advised to be actively present online and demonstrate patience in addressing the learning needs and concerns of students and parents through online communication. This supported the idea of utilizing social media platforms, such as Facebook Messenger, for the implementation of modular distance learning, as suggested by Dangle and Sumaang (2020).

Sub-Theme 1.4. Late Module Retrieval Challenges

"There are really late in getting the module, and it takes two weeks to pass the modules. That was unavoidable during that time. Maybe, due to the fact that many lost their job. There are also parents that are busy working, so their time conflicts with the schedule in getting the module. What will happen is we will call out the attention of the parents then we will adjust what time they are available so they can get the module." -Learning Legend (Line No. 6-7)

There were challenges that some parents faced in picking up the modules in this modular learning setup. These challenges range from work-related conflicts with conflicting schedules result in delayed or missed module pickups. As stated by Informant 2 (Learning Legend), late passing and picking of modules were inevitable since some of the parents were also working. Therefore, teachers' challenges in the distribution of modules were connected to the late claiming of modules, as seen in the study of Castroverde & Arcala (2021). As a result, teachers had to implement various measures, such as





calling out attention through communication channels, conducting home visits, and issuing reminder letters to ensure that all students receive the modules on time.

Theme 2: IMPACT OF MODULAR LEARNING

The review and evaluation in modular learning become challenging for teachers since each module may require its own study that means that teachers need to create and grade multiple assessments for each subject being handled. Furthermore, some parents need to be on time in submitting and collecting modules. As a consequence of late submission of modules which adds to the workload of the teachers in checking and recording the scores of the outputs, consumes time since the teacher keeps going back to where was the backlog of the pupils and creating assessments for the pupils to be used by the teachers in evaluating the learning progress.

Sub-Theme 2.1. Retrieval Delay Affects Checking Process and Workload and Triggers Stress

"Our workload is affected because they take and pass the module on a weekly basis, then if they fail one week, instead of being checked by us, it will be doubled and then it will be combined in another week. We will come back because it will be a long time and we have to do more that is why we really have to manage our time." -Academic Avenger (Line No. 70-72)

Based on the statement given, it appeared that there was a problem with the checking process and record-keeping of the modules of the pupils, which was a challenge for public elementary teachers. The informants expressed frustration in repeatedly checking the missing outputs of the learners, which results in the consumption of time which directly affects the time management and ability to handle other tasks and deadlines. This supported the study of Nazario (2020), stating that the SLMs were provided insufficiently and late, which caused further delays in students' schooling and negatively affects the workload of the teachers.

Sub-Theme 2.2. Workload Impact in Making Assessment and Evaluation

"Our preparation of making the assessment and evaluation of the pupils will be affected because we will lose our time." -Learning Legend (Line No. 28-29)

The statement provided above emphasized that the process in preparing the assessments and evaluation of the teachers were time-consuming due to the late submission of modules by some parents. Through this, David et. al., (2019) provided an additional evidence that public school teachers face a high volume of work-related responsibilities, including tasks such as preparing reports, developing instructional materials, fulfilling school assignments, and other related duties. These additional tasks go beyond the regular six-hour teaching load that they typically have each day.

Sub-Theme 2.3. Closed Monitoring and Tracking

"Since we always check the modules, we can monitor the progress of the kids because we always look who have lacking and can identify if they have high or low score based on their output." -Academic Avenger (Line No. 76-77)

The data gathered from the Informant 4 (Academic Avenger) highlighted the impact of keeping track of pupils' progress. This aligns with the findings of Cardullo et. al., (2021), which proposed that in modular instruction, it was essential for teachers to closely track the advancement of individual students and engaged in regular communication with them.

Theme 3: MODIFIED STRATEGIES USED BY THE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Public elementary school teachers have been at the forefront of the modular approach. With the implementation of modular learning, teachers have had to come up with modified strategies to ensure that the pupils continue to receive quality education despite the challenges in the new typical set of instruction. In this section, the level based modules for achievable learning, feedback via various channels, modification and simplification of summative assessment, and the effectiveness and applicability of strategies used were discussed.

Sub-Theme 3.1. Level-based Modules for Achievable Learning

"The module should be ready then the content is fit according to the cognitive level of my pupils so that it is achievable." -Pedagogy Pioneer (Line No. 55-57)

In order to achieve specific learning objectives, it was crucial to consider the children's level of understanding when selecting the topic and creating the modules. The modules should be clear and not printed in a rush to ensure that the content was suitable and comprehensible for the students. The readiness and preparation of the modules were also mentioned. This supports the assertion made by Codamon (2020) which claims that in the printed modular learning approach, teachers are responsible for preparing learning materials, study guides, and additional resources for modular distance learning.

Sub-Theme 3.2. Feedback via Various Channels

"In every week, I will update the parents about the progress of their child through personal messages or text messages." -Mentor Maverick (Line No. 111-112)

The informants' statements demonstrated the combination of traditional and technology-driven approaches to feedback-giving. It showed recognition of the importance of consistent communication and the use of available resources to keep parents or guardians informed about the pupils' academic progress and areas for improvement. In relation to this, according to the research article by De Leon (2021), effective implementation of modular learning requires regular communication with teachers and other stakeholders.

Sub-Theme 3.3. Modification and Simplification of Summative Assessment

"If there are pupils who will fail our summative assessment every week, we will modify the summative given and give it back." -Learning Legend (Line No. 36-37)





The modification of the assessment and giving back to the pupils were the most common things mentioned by the informant of this said study. By doing so, it was believed that pupils have a better chance of answering the questions correctly and avoid getting low scores or failing the assessments. This statement was supported by the study of Asio & Jimenez (2020), who suggested that the use of remediation activities embedded in the learning resources should improve students' academic performance.

Sub-Theme 3.4. Efficient Time Management

"Yes, it is effective, and I can manage the time, and if I have lots of things that I need to do, my cousin is just there to the rescue. I can seek help in checking." -Academic Avenger (Line No. 87)

The statements provided by the informant, it was concluded that effective time management practices were being implemented within the school setting. The research conducted by Castroverde and Acala (2021) demonstrated that teachers face difficulties in creating modules, primarily due to time constraints.

Conclusion:

Based on the implications highlighted in the conclusion, it was evident that the modular approach to education has both positive aspects and challenges. The most important details are to recognize positive feedback from teachers, provide resources, encourage technology, recognize workload and stress, foster collaboration, provide time management strategies, and regularly assess the effectiveness of the modular approach in public elementary schools.

Limitations and Further Research:

The study involved public elementary school teachers as informants, selected through convenience sampling and non-probability selection to ensure accessibility and relevance. To explore teachers' experiences with modular distance learning, focus group discussions were conducted, bringing together individuals with similar backgrounds. The final number of informants were determined by data saturation, ensuring a comprehensive representation of diverse perspectives, including gender diversity.

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