



Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning Modality

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Abstract:

Despite the actual two-year closure of schools, the use of Modular Distance Learning (MDL) is crucial to the ongoing education of students. As a result of its adoption, the global educational landscape was completely transformed, and difficulties were inevitable for this new kind of instruction (Castroverde, 2021). This study sought to investigate the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality in one the districts of a big-sized division in Central Philippines for the School Year 2020-2021. This descriptive-quantitative study was conducted in seven (7) component schools with 131 respondents taken from the total population of 198 teachers. The independent variables were age, civil status, highest educational attainment and length of service. A self-made questionnaire was used in this study, and it passed the validity and reliability test. The areas used for the determination of challenges were content preparation, distribution and retrieval and feedback giving and assessment. The result of the study showed that the degree of challenges of teachers in Content Preparation is moderate ($M=2.50$, $SD=0.2574$). The degree of challenges in Distribution and Retrieval ($M=2.37$; $SD=0.721$), and Feedback Giving/Assessment were on low level ($M=2.18$; $SD=0.5144$). Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the degree of challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning when grouped and compared according to aforementioned variables. The study recommended the creation of a working group who will take charge of downloading instructional materials, per grade level, which later will be distributed to teachers, to reduce the traffic from DepEd website; and the utilization of a single room for the synchronized disinfection treatment of returned modules.

Keywords: Challenges encountered, Modular distance learning modality.

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

According to Magsambol (2020), 8.8 million parents in the Philippines supported MDL use when the Department of Education conducted a study in June 2020. Nevertheless, because MDL is a form of remote education, a number of issues were noted. It was discovered in the study of Buendicho (2023) that certain pupils were experiencing some difficulty finishing the required outputs. It was difficult for instructors to properly transition to modular learning despite their many coping strategies and changes since some of them lacked the requisite training from the start. According to Cabardo (2022), modular learning technically calls on instructors to be digital savvy, and some struggle with it.

As a teacher who prepares her entire class for the SLMs, the researcher also had a number of difficulties when lessons first started. The source of lesson contents was one of the problems she and many other teachers had. Second, they perceived a lack of centralized guidance on what needs to be prepared and how to prepare it as teachers. While some teachers have to find their own printing materials, many teachers found themselves without any resource material to add in their printed modules. The granular lock down in certain locations actually made the problem worse at that particular time. These concerns motivated the researcher to conduct the study. It is her intention to help establish the challenges relative to the implementation of modular distance learning.

Current State of Knowledge



Methodologies for distance education have gained popularity in the latter decades. Distance education approaches have become increasingly popular in the field of education due to the combination of the demand for ongoing learning and the remarkable advancements in communication technologies. That being said, regardless of whether the people spearheading these programs are politically connected or technically proficient, they typically lack a thorough understanding of distance education methodology and the entire array of options available to accomplish desired results. Senior administrators in higher education are now more concerned with the financial effects of distant learning—that is, the cost savings—than with academic concerns, and technology corporations are making money in the process (Sadiq & Samir, 2016).

Alelaimat, et al. (2015) asserts that there is no lack of difficulties in education. Some of the most significant problems we confront can seem incredibly difficult to solve. Our most pressing problems continue to elude us, and despite constant cries for change, government studies, and reform initiatives, progress is frequently sluggish. It's not as though we are unaware of the difficulties. However, their roots can occasionally be found in deeply ingrained educational processes and systems that are hard to alter, or they can be found mostly outside the purview of schools. Sometimes, a political solution is to shift attention to low-hanging fruit and fast wins, making changes where change is possible at the edges. But addressing our most ingrained and recalcitrant educational issues is necessary for genuine reform and substantial advancements in raising the standard and equity of Australian education. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, Angara, a sitting senator for the Philippines, stated that the Department of Education is facing numerous learning difficulties.

The Department of Education (DepEd) will leverage online learning tools like the DepEd Commons website, which has 8 million members, to address quarantine issues. In addition, TV and radio-based alternatives will be introduced in places where Internet access is restricted by enacting RA 8375, which dedicates 15% of a broadcast network's daily air time to kid-friendly programming. Beginning in July, educators will receive training on how to use these new educational resources (Magsambol, 2022). The absence of printed modules was one of the main issues with modular learning. In order to finish the amount of modules that need to be given to the students, teachers typically print self-study materials. Instructors were required to use the SDO-San Juan Portal's soft copies of the modules before sending them to the students. Second was the majority of the parents did not follow their assigned schedule in getting and retrieving the modules.

This resulted in the unnecessary reporting to schools of teachers as they went back and forth just so they could entertain the parents. This was such a huge health risk for them given the circumstances of the COVID-19 infection. Third and lastly was the late delivery of modules from the service providers which oftentimes, caused the stress to the teachers as they needed to reproduce the modules themselves for the modular learners. It also meant that the late modules would just pile up in the school and would no longer be usable for the time being (Melorin, 2021). According to a research by Dangle and Sumaoang (2020), the primary issues that arose were students' difficulties with independent study, parents' ignorance of how to properly mentor their child or children academically, and a lack of school money for the creation and delivery of modules. Therefore, it is clear that using modular distance learning has certain challenges.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study was anchored on the theory of Educational Challenges by Robert Yerkes and John Dodson (1908). This theory applies to the present study because it accounts for the different level of challenges encountered teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning to ensure the continuity of learning amidst closure of schools due to the pandemic.

In their original work, Robert Yerkes and John Dodson (1908) proposed that there is an ideal level of arousal for learning tasks based on the problems in education. "Teachers' expectations should match the inabilities and actual needs of the students," according to academic theory. However, in this particular study, the teachers' difficulties were brought on by their inexperience with coping strategies and modifications for modular distance learning. This hypothesis is similarly relevant to the study since it takes into consideration all of the variables that affect how difficult it is for teachers to maintain students' high levels of engagement while also making sure that all other connected issues are appropriately handled.

A wide range of fields, including statistics, mechanics, quality, and ergonomics, backed the suggested theory. These included the effect of the central limit theorem, teaching and learning theories, learning outcomes, and student feedback. In the majority of courses that used the suggested theory, sustained optimal difficulties were noted.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the degree of challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality in one the districts of a medium-sized division in Central Philippines, for the School Year 2020-2021. Furthermore, the study sought to determine the following: 1) the degree of challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning in the areas of content preparation, distribution and



retrieval and feedbacking and assessments; and 2) if there is a significant difference in the degree of challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning when grouped and compared according to aforementioned variables.

Methodology:

Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design to determine the degree of challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality. This study's descriptive design is appropriate since its goal was to identify prevailing conditions or relationships, held beliefs and attitudes, processes and effects, and emerging trends. The design is a scientific methodology that entails monitoring and characterizing a subject's behavior without exerting any kind of influence.

Respondents

The respondents were the 131 out of 198 total population of teachers in one of the districts of a large-sized division in Central Philippines. The paper made use of purposive sampling to determine the sample size.

Instruments

To determine the degree of challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality this study made use of a self-made data gathering instrument which was subjected to Validity (4.21 - excellent) and Reliability testing (0.910 interpreted as "highly reliable"). The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part 1 gathered the socio-economic information of the respondents such as age, civil status, highest educational attainment, and length of service. Part 2 contained the questionnaire proper with 30 line items. There were 10 line items per area.

Procedure for Data Collection

After completing the Validity and Reliability tests for the instrument, the researcher wrote a letter to the Schools Division Superintendent seeking permission to conduct the study within the specified period and schools. The approved letter was reproduced and distributed to the school heads. The hard copy of the data-gathering instrument was given to target respondents outside of school hours so as not to distract the schools from their normal daily routine. The respondents were given five days to fill out and return the instrument. Finally, the accomplished data-gathering instrument was encoded and tallied to the pre-formatted Excel file for an orderly tabulation.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No. 1 used descriptive analytical scheme to determine the degree of challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality in terms of content preparation, distribution and retrieval and feedbacking and assessments, and the statistical tool used was Mean.

Objective No. 2 used comparative analytical scheme to determine the significant difference in the degree of challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance when grouped according to the aforesaid variables. Mann Whitney U Test was employed as its statistical tool.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher made sure that no personal information that could compromise the identity of the respondents was stored on any device in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, particularly with regard to the researcher's and analyst's access to the data. All of the collected data was solely accessible to the researcher. As a result, participants were fully informed about the methods used throughout the research and were urged to sign a consent form in order to participate. Participants were also given the assurance that no one, including the public, would learn of the information they disclosed. Furthermore, all materials gathered were disposed of properly. Lastly, participants will have the option to voluntarily withdraw from this research study at any time during its duration. A study report would guarantee anonymity.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the data, the analysis, and interpretation of the same to meet the objectives of the study as stated in the objectives. All of these were made possible by adhering to specific protocols that provided precise data and solutions for every objective.

Degree of Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in Content Preparation, Distribution and Retrieval and Feedback Giving and Assessment



Table 1

Degree of Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the Area Content Preparation

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I...		
1. had no time to review the content of the modules before printing.	2.17	Low Degree
2. had no technical assistance provision from my school head in terms of preparing the content of the modules.	2.28	Low Degree
3. could not access DepEd Common and related websites.	3.44	Moderate Degree
4. found it difficult to download lesson content due to poor internet connection.	2.39	Low Degree
5. had technical difficulties sourcing for lesson contents.	2.31	Low Degree
6. experienced lack of organizational support from peers.	3.33	Moderate Degree
7. had no early training on module content preparation.	2.27	Low Degree
8. had limited skill on how to uniformly access module contents from same sources.	2.13	Low Degree
9. had some difficulty following synchronized preparation due to work load.	2.35	Low Degree
10. had no working laptop and printer.	2.38	Low Degree
Overall Mean	2.50	Moderate Degree

Item No. 8 which states "had limited skill on how to uniformly access module contents from same sources" got the lowest mean score of 2.13, interpreted as "low degree". Item No. 3 which states "could not access DepEd Common and related websites" got the highest mean score of 3.44, interpreted as "moderate degree". The results suggests that some teachers experienced difficulties in downloading their lesson contents from DepEd Commons due to a heavy internet traffic. This result equally reveals that there are few teachers who may not have the right technical expertise in accessing the website or in downloading some teaching materials.

This result was concurred by the study of Montero (2020) who conducted a study on the challenges of teachers in the utilization of ICT-based learning in one the districts of a big-sized division in the south-eastern part of Negros Occidental. The results showed that teachers are unable to easily access online learning resource materials; and at times, lesson contents are not free or errors.

Table 2

Degree of Challenges Encountered by Science Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the Area Distribution and Retrieval

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I...		
1. Could not cope with prescribed schedule of distribution and retrieval.	2.22	Low Degree
2. had issues implementing safety measures during module distribution and retrieval.	2.29	Low Degree
3. saw no uniformity in the schedule of distribution and retrieval in school.	2.27	Low Degree
4. was unable to communicate with parents and learners because of limited resources.	2.54	Moderate Degree
5. had difficulties giving instructions to parents about health protocols because of a tight work schedule.	2.63	Moderate Degree
6. had no control over unreturned or unclaimed modules as parents refuse to coordinate.	2.38	Low Degree



7. had limited means to disinfect modules being distributed.	2.75	Moderate Degree
8. had problems accommodating late comers during module distribution and retrieval because of a tight work schedule.	2.21	Low Degree
9. had no system in the school being uniformly followed during distribution and retrieval of modules.	2.21	Low Degree
10. could not extend beyond scheduled time of distribution and retrieval because of other priorities.	2.15	Low Degree
Overall Mean	2.37	Low Degree

Item No. 10 which states "could not extend beyond scheduled time of distribution and retrieval because of other priorities" got the lowest mean score of 2.15, interpreted as "low degree". Item No. 7 which states "had limited means to disinfect modules being distributed" got the highest mean score of 2.75, interpreted as "moderate degree". This result suggests that one of the major problems at the time of the pandemic is taking the risks of accepting returned modules that were not properly disinfected from learners. This is due to the fact that printed self-learning modules could not be sprayed with any liquid disinfectant such as alcohol, otherwise the printed contents may be erased.

This result was concurred by the study of Villa (2022) who conducted a study on the challenges of teachers in Modular Learning in one of the districts of a big-sized division in Northern Negros Occidental. The study revealed that receiving returned modules which are not properly disinfected may pose grave health risks for them. It was also revealed that the parents are not aware of other disinfecting methods for the modules.

Table 3

Degree of Challenges Encountered by Science Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the Area Feedback Giving and Assessment

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I...		
1. prepared assessment based on books only and not on their learning competencies aligned to MELCs.	2.15	Low Degree
2. conducted post-test without giving pre-test.	2.13	Low Degree
3. filed test/exam results without item analysis.	2.11	Low Degree
4. did not provide pre-test to determine baseline knowledge.	2.05	Low Degree
5. did not provide post-test to determine learners' improvement.	2.13	Low Degree
6. did not provide key answers to questionnaires given.	2.19	Low Degree
7. did not provide enrichment activities for learners who are at risk in failing.	2.17	Low Degree
8. did not follow required numbers of summative test and performance task based on DepEd memorandum.	2.11	Low Degree
9. did not send feedback to parents about learners' status.	2.39	Low Degree
10. prepared assessment without any Table of Specification.	2.35	Low Degree
Overall Mean	2.18	Low Degree

Item No. 4 which states "did not provide pre-test to determine baseline knowledge" got the lowest mean score of 2.05, interpreted as "low degree". While Item No. 9 which states "did not send feedback to parents about learners' status" got the highest mean score of 2.39, interpreted as "low degree". The result suggests that there are teachers who may not have the habit or practice of providing feedback to parents regarding their children's performance in school. Skipping this very essential part may not give the parents proper heads-up on the performance of their children.

This result was concurred by the results obtained by Escobin (2021) in a study conducted to investigate the challenges encountered by public elementary school teachers in one of the medium sized divisions in Southern Negros



Occidental. The results showed that some teachers are not using the exam results of the learners as starting point for coaching or mentoring learners.

Comparative Analysis in the Degree of Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the Areas, Content Preparation, Distribution and Retrieval and Feedback Giving and Assessment when grouped and compared according to the Variables, Age, Civil Status, Highest Educational Attainment and Length of Service

Table 4

Difference in the Degree of Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the Area Content Preparation According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	68	53.60	1299.00	0.000	0.05	Significant
	Older	63	79.38				
Civil Status	Single	59	59.94	1766.50	0.096	0.05	Not Significant
	Married	72	70.97				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	83	61.10	1585.00	0.050	0.05	Significant
	Higher	48	74.48				
Length of Service	Shorter	72	54.58	1301.50	0.000	0.05	Significant
	Longer	59	79.94				

When grouped according to age, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1299.00 and the *p*-value was 0.000, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". When grouped according to highest educational attainment, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1585.00 and the *p*-value was 0.050, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". When grouped according to length of service, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1301.50 and the *p*-value was 0.000, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant".

This implies that, age, highest educational attainment and length of service significantly affect the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning in terms of content preparation.

When grouped according to civil status, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1766.50 and the *p*-value was 0.096, it is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant". This implies that, civil status does not significantly affect the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning in terms of content preparation.

A study on the use of modular distance learning in Philippine secondary public schools was carried out by Dangle and Sumaoang in 2020. The primary issues that surfaced were students' difficulties with independent study, parents' ignorance of how to properly mentor their child or children academically, and a lack of school funds for the creation and delivery of modules. In conclusion, the study was able to identify the participants' main resource, readiness, and communication challenges. The findings of this study could potentially act as a basis for future enhancements to the programs that the institutions already provide as well as guidelines for the application of modular distance learning.

Table 5

Difference in the Degree of Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the Area Distribution and Retrieval According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	68	54.34	1349.00	0.000	0.05	Significant
	Older	63	78.59				
Civil Status	Single	59	53.74	1400.50	0.001	0.05	Significant
	Married	72	76.05				



Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	83	60.13	1504.50	0.020	Significant
	Higher	48	76.16			
Length of Service	Shorter	72	53.26	1207.00	0.000	Significant
	Longer	59	81.54			

When grouped according to age, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1349.00 and the p -value was 0.000, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". When grouped according to civil status, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1400.50 and the p -value was 0.001, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". When grouped according to highest educational attainment, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1504.00 and the p -value was 0.020, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". When grouped according to length of service, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1207.00 and the p -value was 0.000, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". This implies that, age, civil status, highest educational attainment and length of service significantly affect the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning in terms of distribution and retrieval.

A study on the obstacles and strategies teachers in the Philippines faced when using modular distance learning was carried out by Cabardo et al. in 2022. The findings showed that instructors face several difficulties when it comes to modular distance learning, including lengthy, unfinished, and unanswered modules; insufficient parental support; and poor teacher preparation. Teachers use time management, consistent communication with parents and students, teacher reskilling and upskilling, and blended learning as strategies to overcome obstacles. In light of this, it is advised that DepEd keep up its monitoring and assessment of the implemented modular distance learning in order to determine its applicability and quality given the state of education in the nation at the moment.

Table 6

Difference in the Degree of Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the Area Feedback Giving and Assessment According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	68	55.08	1399.50	0.001	0.05	Significant
	Older	63	77.79				
Civil Status	Single	59	56.35	1554.50	0.008	0.05	Significant
	Married	72	73.91				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	83	62.05	1664.00	0.116	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	48	72.83				
Length of Service	Shorter	72	54.71	1311.00	0.000	0.05	Significant
	Longer	59	79.78				

When grouped according to age, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1399.50 and the p -value was 0.001, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". When grouped according to civil status, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1554.50 and the p -value was 0.008, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". When grouped according to length of service, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1311.00 and the p -value was 0.000, it is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant". This implies that, age, civil status and length of service significantly affect the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning in terms of feedback giving and assessment.

When grouped according to highest educational attainment, the computed Mann-Whitney U test was 1664.50 and the p -value was 0.116, it is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant". This implies that, highest educational attainment does not significantly affect the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning in terms of feedback giving and assessment.

Castroverde and Acala (2021) conducted research on the difficulties faced by educators in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers from various Tacloban City public secondary schools participated in the study. The difficulties faced by educators were determined by looking at how they organize, prepare, and deliver lessons, keep track of students' progress, verify, assess, and give feedback on their work. Additionally, educators employed a variety of strategies to deal with the difficulties presented by the modular distance learning modality. These included time management, creative teaching methods, adjusting to the shifts brought about by the new normal trend in education, flexibility, offering substitute plans, optimism, patience, and preparing oneself with the skills required for the new normal ways of learning.



Conclusion

The results showed that Content Preparation was the highest of all the challenges encountered by teachers. This is because of the fact that some teachers are unable to access DepEd commons to download the materials needed to be printed for the modules. The challenges encountered by teachers on content preparation could also be due to the fact that some teachers, at that time, were not technologically ready. When grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables showed that content preparation was the highest, despite it is being moderate. This suggests that at that time, some teachers were yet unprepared. Some teachers at that time were struggling on how to prepare the lessons to be printed on the modules. The significant difference shows that the degree of challenges of teachers were not the same according to categories. This means that the challenges of younger teachers were different from the older ones; also in terms of civil status, the experiences of singles differ from the married ones, the same is true when grouped according to highest educational attainment and length of service.

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