

Teachers' Roles, Needs, and Best Practices in Modular Distance Learning Modality

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Abstract

Modular distance learning is a new learning modality adapted by the Philippines' educational system due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, this study was conducted to determine teachers' roles, needs, and practices in modular learning modality. A mixed methods design was employed for this research. It utilised a questionnaire in gathering data on the roles, needs, and best practices of the teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality. An unstructured interview and focus group discussion was conducted through Google Meet to determine the best practices and the problems encountered by the participants. The data analysis approaches included frequency count, percentage, and thematic analysis to determine the teachers' roles and needs in implementing modular distance learning modality. The study was participated by elementary and secondary teachers in Irosin, Sorsogon, Philippines. It was concluded from this study that the participating teachers were very active in mentoring the students, assessing the learners, and designing instructional materials. However, they encountered varied problems in implementing modular distance learning modality. They need improvements in instructional design, interactive technology, curriculum development, learning assessment, and mentoring. The teachers need the most assistance in instructional design, while needing the least in mentoring on the varied problems encountered in implementing modular distance learning modality.

Keywords: distance learning, educational technology, modular learning, online learning, learning modality

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a global health crisis by infecting and killing millions of people worldwide. Within the Philippines only, this crisis translates into almost half a million infections and more than 5,000 deaths (Worldometer, 2020). The Philippine government implemented quarantine protocol and strict health measures to reduce transmission and infection. These measures resulted in the temporary shutdown of educational institutions, which affected countless students. Over 28 million Filipino learners across academic levels had to stay at home and comply with the Philippine government's quarantine measures (UNESCO, 2020). Responding to the needs of learners where face-to-face classes and mass gatherings are prohibited, the basic and higher education departments in the country implemented proactive policies so that education can be continued despite the closure of schools and universities. These policies included modified forms of modular learning and online learning to facilitate student learning activities.

Online learning can be synchronous; real-time lectures and time-based outcomes assessments, or asynchronous; activities with delayed or flexible timing such as prerecorded video lectures and time-independent assessments (Oztok et al., 2013). Previous studies stated that online learning or also known as distance education has several advantages including the reduction of travel costs and time, easier and access to expert professionals, expanding opportunities at a worldwide range, and a versatile approach that permits students to access courses and their contents at their convenience (Finch and Jacobs, 2012). Based on the Learning Enrolment and Survey Form results, modular remote learning is the most favoured learning system by most parents or guardians in the basic education sector. For parents with children enrolled in this academic year, specifically, studying through printed and digital modules has emerged as the most popular way of remote learning (Bernardo, 2020). This mode of learning is also favourable for the majority of Filipino students, which contributed to the development of bichronous distance learning in a non-credit course for graduate students (Digo, 2021).

Modular learning involves individualised instruction that lets learners use Self-Learning Modules in print or digital format; whichever is applicable in the context of the learner, and other learning resources such as learner's materials, textbooks, activity sheets, and study guides (DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020). In this setting, the teacher monitors the learners' progress online. The learners may ask for a teacher's assistance via email, telephone, text message, or instant messaging. When possible, the teacher must do home visits to learners needing remediation or assistance (Llego, 2020). The introduction of modular learning and other alternative learning methods allowed education to be resumed during the pandemic. The Department of Education in Region 5 (DepEd-5) stated that it had recorded 1,661,786 students who have enrolled for the school year 2020-2021 after the new term was delayed for months by coronavirus precautions. There were over 109,000 enrolled in kindergarten; a total of 768,310 in elementary level; 523,659 in junior high school; and 213,428 in senior high schools. DepEd-5 also disclosed that classes under the alternative learning systems pushed through with many enrollees.

Gilbert Sadsad, DepEd director for Bicol, said the basic learning continuity plan in the region was dynamic and responsive to the needs of the learners. The learning continuity plan comprises the different learning modalities that can be used by teachers and learners based on their available resources. It includes the modular learning approach, the TV or radio-based learning method, and the online modality. Most elementary schools in the Province of Sorsogon adapted parts of modular learning and online modality into what this paper connotes as modular distance learning for the school year 2020-2021. However, teachers face difficulties to implement the modular learning approach under the current normal education system. These problems include difficulty for teachers to successfully reach out to every learner at home, even when teachers use different communication forms. Hence, developing the learners' skills inclusively and comprehensively became difficult because these students did not participate in the lessons conducted by the teachers. DepEd constantly implements multiple systems to fill in the gaps, however, the effort only results in complicating the teachers' tasks, since it is not easy to gather everybody to execute the various DepEd services in this phase of the pandemic.

2. Literature Review

The history of distance education begins at the point when a reliable communication method was established. Most historians date distance education to the eighteenth century, when a few lecturers began offering correspondence courses (Keles & Ozel, 2016). The concept of distance education has evolved through generations; from mailing to broadcast and computer-mediated distance education (Anderson & Simpson, 2012). Today, distance education programs have a wide range of approaches. Print technology dominated the first generation of distance education. The proliferation of a fundamental communication system, the postal service, made education possible beyond the physical boundaries of university campuses (Caruth & Caruth, 2013). Various organisations adopted correspondence education to bring a sense of social justice and equal opportunities (Simonsen et al., 2015). First-generation distance education complied with this notion by expanding the scope of education to include the less fortunate with limited or no access to educational resources and institutions (Anderson & Simpson, 2012).

Distance education is an educational experience where instructors and learners are separated in time and space (Keegan, 2002). The elements comprised in distance education include physical separation of

teacher and learner; learning occurring in the context of an educational institution; the usage of technical media; distance communication between teacher and learner; occasional face-to-face meetings when possible; and the usage of industrial model to provide education. The most popular type of distance learning in the Philippines is modular learning, according to Bernardo (2020). Bernardo's 2020 statement was supported by a survey conducted by the Department of Education (DepEd), finding that parents with children enrolled in this academic year preferred learning through printed and digital modules the most; among other distance learning methods. Hence, all public schools in the Philippines currently use this learning modality. This was also based on the consideration of the learners in rural areas where the internet is not accessible for online learning.

The popularity of modular teaching and learning may also be derived from its extensive and effective application. Kandarp Sejpal (2013) implied that modular teaching was one of the most widespread and recognised teaching-learning techniques in many countries, including the Asian and western regions. A modular approach was proven to be applicable in almost all subjects including natural sciences; specifically biology and medical education, social sciences, and computer education. This method considers the individual differences between the learners, which necessitates the planning process for adopting the most appropriate teaching techniques to help the learners grow and develop at their own pace. This arrangement is consistent with the opinion of Loughran (2004) who pointed out that individualised education programmes may aid in real teaching and learning experiences, rather than plain lecturing and listening. From their expert perspective, education is only acquired when a learner comprehends a topic and can re-articulate the knowledge in his or her own words.

The whole process of distance learning, however, involves more than only teachers and students. Isman & Dabaj (2004) proposed the following roles among the people involved in making distance education possible: (a) Students, who are responsible to learn and overcome any obstacles that may hinder that process; (b) teachers, with the primary responsibility to design the course and guide the students in accordance to their needs; (c) technical team, who are responsible for designing the digital platforms and environments for an effective teaching-learning atmosphere, such as designing the educational website or mobile applications; and (d) establisher, who research, plan, and propose the implementation of the general education system, such as the ministry of education. The last two groups of people have responsibilities as important as the teachers and students in the process of distance education, even though they are not publicly visible as the representation of distance education.

Nevertheless, the implementation of distance education was not as easy as it was presented, especially when it was rushed due to the pandemic. As highlighted by Dangle and Sumaoang (2020), the teachers had immense concerns about electricity loss and the lack of materials to print modules. They also had issues with printing and mass-producing modules, let alone delivering the modules to the learners' homes. Besides, there was a surplus of papers to check and record, in addition to their existing school paperwork and duties. Other than that, Thorell et al. (2021) discovered that only a few available online platforms were effective in implementing distance learning, while in contrast, some teachers had poor technological skills to effectively utilise available digital platforms. The children, meanwhile, were subjected to unequal education during online teaching implementation depending on their access to the classes or learning materials; whereby those with a low socioeconomic background were prone to be left behind.

Regardless, as distance learning became the new normal throughout the pandemic, the teachers developed coping mechanisms in response to the challenges they were facing; which De Villa and Manalo (2020) categorised into five core themes: positive well-being, good time management, openness to change, peer mentoring, and collaboration. In the case of mentoring, the use of facilitation strategies for effective mentoring should be emphasized (Martin et al., 2019). Additionally, Garrison and Anderson (2003) suggested that teachers must establish adequate teaching and social presence to teach successfully online. According to Garrison and Anderson (2003), teaching presence translates as the ability to convey personally profound and academically valuable learning experiences; whereas social presence is defined as the capability to express and establish themselves as a member of the educational social circle. Regarding the students' education inequality, Rasmitadila et al. (2020) proposed that online learning framework designs should include considerations of the family economic backgrounds of the students, as well as their learning experiences and needs. Garbe et al. (2020) added that internet coverage and infrastructure

should be improved, while computers or smartphones be made accessible to make remote learning more effective.

The researchers believed that a study on the proposed standards in modular instruction as a teaching modality will significantly contribute to addressing challenges in today's new normal education system. Hence, the study aimed to determine the roles, needs, and best practices of teachers in the modular distance learning modality.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Design

Mixed-method research design using an explanatory sequential framework (Creswell & Plano, 2018) was adapted for this study. In this design, the study began with a survey on the roles and needs of teachers in the modular distance learning modality, then followed up on the result by using an interview to elaborate on the study's specific findings. The findings collected in the interview were presented in narrative and thematic forms. The two phases were integrated during the analysis and formulation of the proposed output of the study as presented in Figure 1 below.

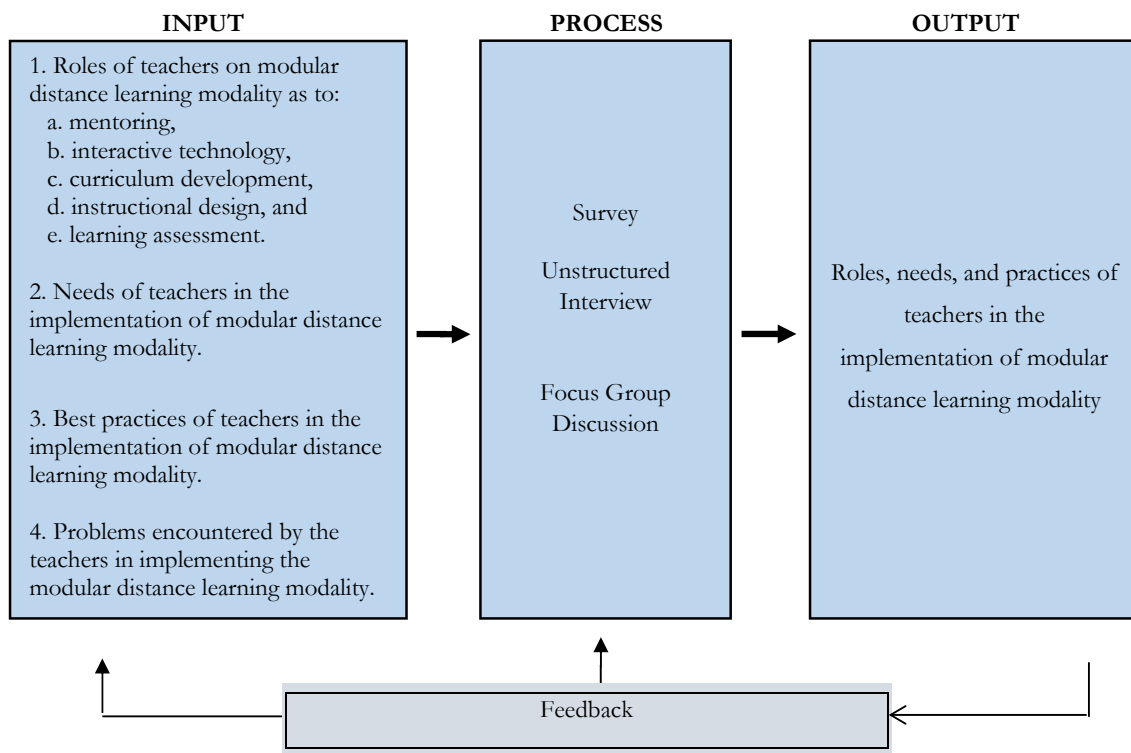


Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm

3.2. Informants

Informants for the survey were chosen from 10 elementary and secondary schools respectively in Irosin, Sorsogon, Philippines. Since data gathering was conducted during the pandemic, purposive sampling was implemented in selecting ten elementary teachers from 10 elementary schools and 10 secondary teachers from 3 secondary schools in one of the municipalities of Sorsogon, Philippines. They agreed to participate in the survey, interview, and focus group discussions conducted to contribute data for the research. The major criteria used to select the participants in this study were their experience in

conducting modular teaching as basic education teachers and their consent to participate in all stages of data collection: The survey, interview, and focus group discussion, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3. Research Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire developed to gather quantitative data for the roles and needs of teachers in modular distance learning modality. The focus group discussion and interview were conducted after the survey to gather data on teachers' perceptions and best practices in implementing a modular distance learning modality.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed on September 6, 2021. The researchers gave ample time for the informants to answer the questionnaires, resulting in a 95% retrieval rating. The remaining 5% either could not submit on time or refused to return the questionnaires. Then, a virtual interview session through Google Meet, an online platform, was conducted on September 10, 2021, with the informants to gather data on teachers' perceptions and best practices in the implementation of modular distance learning modality. The informants' feedback was recorded, but since the data recorded through the interview was not enough, a supplementary focus group discussion was conducted on September 15, 2021, to collect additional data from the participants. This process was done through a series of questions asked to the informants.

3.5. Treatment of Data

The data retrieved from the informants were analysed, measured, and interpreted by using appropriate data analysis tools. Frequency and percentage were used to scale the data on teachers' roles, needs, and best practices in the modular distance learning modality from the survey. The interview and focus group discussion sessions were recorded in narrative form to retain the information derived from the informants. Then, the data collected from the sessions were coded, clustered, and segmented to identify the themes. Further qualitative data analysis of the coded responses was done to develop the final themes.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Roles of teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality

Table 1 presents the mentoring role of teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality. It shows that 19 informants said that their primary mentoring roles were to provide the learners with modules that have undergone quality assurance, to assist the learners with direct and simple instructions about the modules, and to conduct random and scheduled home visits for monitoring the progress of the modular learning activities. On the other hand, 17 informants provided the struggling learners with supplementary worksheets and activity sheets, while 11 provided learner-friendly modules that match the learners' level of understanding.

Table 1. Role of teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality as to mentoring

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Provide the learners with modules that have undergone quality assurance.	19	95
2. Assist the learners with direct and simple instructions about the modules.	19	95
3. Conduct random and scheduled home visits to monitor the progress of the modular learning activities.	19	95
4. Provide struggling learners with supplementary worksheets and activity sheets.	17	85
5. Provide learner-friendly modules that match the level of understanding of learners.	11	55

The data denoted that the participating teachers' focus in mentoring was to provide the learners with the modules as a primary source or springboard in relaying the lesson. It is consistent with Unique Philippines Team (2020) who mentioned that reliability is the pivotal instrument in the usage of self-learning modules in the new normal. The modules' contents should meet the standard learning capacity of a student because students will primarily assess these instructional materials on their own. Furthermore, assisting the learners with the use of modules and home visitation was the top concern of the teachers. These actions were coherent with Martin et al. (2019) who emphasised the use of facilitation strategies for effective mentoring.

The role of teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality as to interactive technology is revealed in Table 2. It shows that 14 teachers utilised equipment that require the use of interactive technology for the modular distance learning; 11 teachers guided the learners in using technology in their home-based learning activities and oriented the learners in using both computers and social media as platforms in the teaching-learning process, while and 10 teachers introduced technology and other platforms of learning to the learners. Meanwhile, only three teachers facilitated hands-on instruction on devices or equipment during online discussions.

Table 2. Role of teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality as to interactive technology

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Utilise equipment that requires interactive technology for modular distance learning.	14	70
2. Guide the learners in using technology in their home-based learning activities.	11	55
3. Orient the learners in using computers and social media as platforms in the teaching-learning process.	11	55
4. Introduce technology and other platforms of learning to the learners.	10	50
5. Facilitate hands-on instruction on devices/equipment during online discussion.	3	15

This finding implied that the teachers utilise Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment to implement modular distance learning modality. In addition, teachers integrated technology as a means of communication and a platform for the teaching-learning process. Generally, Chin (2020) explained that the technical element had often been the most substantial issue of distance learning. Technicality involves the availability of devices for both students and teachers. These devices include mobile phones, computers, laptops, printers, and good internet connections.

Table 3 illustrates the role of teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality as to curriculum and development. It shows 16 teachers acting as the writer of modules and learning activity sheets, and 11 teachers serving as the personnel who reproduce the modules. However, only four teachers serve as the editor of the modules, three teachers act as consultants or informants in the survey regarding the writing, printing, and distribution of modules, and only one joined the quality assurance team in the development of modules.

Table 3. Role of teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality as to curriculum and development

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Act as writers of modules and Learning Activity Sheets	16	80
2. Serve as the personnel who reproduce the modules learners.	11	55
3. Act as consultant/informant in the survey regarding the writing, printing, and distribution of modules	3	15
4. Serve as the editor of the modules.	4	20
5. Join the quality assurance team in the development of modules	1	5

From the data, it can be deduced that even though the quality maintenance of modules is just as important as the devices, they did not require a lot of manpower. Rather, a few designated experts in content creation and editing were already adequate.

The role of teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality as to instructional design is disclosed in Table 4. It displayed 19 teachers provided various activities other than modules when it is necessary; 15 of them edited the modules before giving them to the learners; 14 teachers downloaded and printed the modules; 10 teachers changed the pictures to make them clear and vivid to the learners, while 9 teachers made another instructional material for enrichment activities for struggling learners.

Table 4. Role of teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality as to instructional design

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Provides various activities other than modules when it is necessary.	19	95
2. Edit the modules before giving them to the learners.	15	75
3. Download and print the modules.	14	70
4. Changes the pictures to make them clear and vivid to the learners.	10	50
5. Make another instructional material for enrichment activities for struggling learners.	9	45

These results revealed the role of teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality as to instructional design. Providing the students with supplementary materials when necessary and editing the modules before they were given to the students were the top concerns of teachers under instructional design. The situation implied that teachers provided and filled in the needs of the learners in terms of instructional design. It was also revealed that the teachers were the ones who made and reproduced learning activity sheets which will be given to the students. However, the instructional design may be created along relevant educational teaching and learning theories; which as reported by Martin et al. (2019), were one of the best practices for this process.

Table 5 contains the frequency of the teacher's roles in implementing modular distance learning modality as to learning assessment. It shows that 19 teachers identified the least learned competencies and provided intervention, and if necessary, administered summative tests at the end of every quarter, and utilized the revised digital class record in assessing learners. Furthermore, 16 teachers checked and analyzed the result of modular activities, while 12 conducted summative tests every two weeks.

Table 5. Role of teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality as to learning assessment

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Identify the least learned competencies and provide intervention if necessary	19	95
2. Summative test at the end of every quarter.	19	95
3. Utilise the revised e-class record in assessing learners.	19	95
4. Check and analyse the result of modular activities.	16	80
5. Conduct summative tests every two weeks.	12	60

This data implies that the teachers conducted various strategies to assess students' performance. It also shows that the teachers thought and acted creatively to improve and sustain the requirements of the learning assessment. It supported Martin et al. (2019) who reported the important role of faculty in the use of rubrics for various assessment strategies.

4.2. Needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality

It is necessary to determine the needs of the teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality so that accurate and effective support can be provided to further develop modular instruction in the new normal mentoring. Table 6 revealed the needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality as to mentoring. Generally, it shows that mentoring was indeed a need in the implementation. Specifically, 13 teachers needed security from the barangay whenever home visitation was conducted, primarily in the secluded area; 12 teachers said they needed training on how to mentor learners through home visitation and the same number of teachers needed financial assistance for a better internet connection to reach out to the parents for mentoring the learners. Furthermore, 11 teachers said they needed technical assistance from the school head, and 10 teachers said they needed transportation allowances for home visitation.

Table 6. Needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality as to mentoring

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Security from the barangay whenever home visitation is conducted, mainly in the secluded area.	13	65
2. Training on how to mentor learners through home visitation.	12	60
3. Financial assistance for a better internet connection to reach out to the parents for mentoring the learners.	12	60
4. Technical assistance from the school head.	11	55
5. Transportation allowances in doing home visitation.	10	50

The result implied that the teachers needed security, specialised training in conducting home visitation, and financial assistance regarding internet connectivity to reach out to the parents and mentor the learners. This finding is consistent with the preparation and challenges of distance learning as reported by De Villa & Manalo (2020).

Table 7 shows the needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality concerning interactive technology. In the utilisation of interactive technology for modular distance learning modality, 16 teachers said that they need online seminars and workshops on the utilisation of various computer software that will be needed in the modular approach. They also needed stable and excellent internet connectivity and more training or webinars on using different platforms to deepen the learners' digital literacy. Additionally, 14 teachers said they need ample time to familiarise themselves with the different technology platforms to communicate with parents and teachers. Lastly, 12 teachers said they also need devices other than mobile phones to reach out to the learners.

Table 7. Needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality as to interactive technology

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Online seminar and workshop on utilising various computer software that will be needed in the modular approach.	16	80
2. Stable and excellent internet connectivity.	16	80
3. Training/webinars in using the different platforms to deepen the knowledge of technology for the learners.	16	80
4. Ample time to familiarise with different platforms in technology to communicate with parents and teachers.	14	70
5. Devices other than mobile phones to reach out to the learners.	12	60

This data implies that the teachers needed continuous training and capacity building, as suggested by De Villa and Manalo (2020). It was specifically identified from this data that the highest focus should be placed on the utilisation of technology and familiarisation with different communication platforms.

Table 8 includes the needs of teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality within the scope of curriculum development. In regards to curriculum, 17 teachers suggested that there must be clear directives or guidelines concerning the content and unpacking of the most essential learning competencies (MELC) for the development of modules or learning activity sheets (LAS). At the same time, 16 teachers said that they also need in-service training for the construction of modules or LAS. Meanwhile, 14 teachers mentioned that they needed intervention in addressing the difficulties in answering the modules or LAS, and orientation or instruction in simplifying modules. Whereas, nine teachers said they need ready-made conceptualised modules, especially for mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE). The data from Table 8 further strengthen the necessity of persistent coaching to improve the teachers' competencies (De Villa & Manalo, 2020); this time, in the construction of learning materials.

Table 8. Needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality as to curriculum development

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Clear directives or guidelines concerning the content and unpacking of MELCs for modules/LAS development.	17	85
2. In-Service Training for modules/LAS construction/making.	16	80
3. Intervention in addressing the difficulties in answering the modules/LAS.	14	70
4. Orientation/instruction in simplification of modules.	14	70
5. Ready-made conceptualised modules, especially MTB-MLE.	9	45

Table 9 displays the needs of teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality as to instructional design. It shows 18 teachers revealing that they need quality modules and enough time to plan effective instructional materials for modular distance learning modality. If they did not have to prepare it themselves, 17 teachers demanded modules or LAS that are error-free. Then, to implement the modular distance learning modality properly and effectively, six teachers said they need sufficient materials and facilities. Moreover, 15 teachers revealed that they need materials for printing when school supplies are insufficient.

Table 9. Needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality as to instructional design

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Enough time to plan effective instructional material for a modular distance learning modality.	18	90
2. Quality modules for the learners.	18	90
3. Modules/LAS that are error-free.	17	85
4. Sufficient materials and facilities to implement the modular distance learning modality properly and effectively.	16	80
5. Materials for printing in times when school supplies are insufficient.	15	75

From this table, it can be inferred that good instructional design requires fine-quality content, detailed editing skills or a designated editor, ample time, and adequate materials plus facilities. This deduction is consistent with Hamora et al. (2022) who mentioned that skills in instructional design are very important to make the modules effective and acceptable to both the teachers and students; along with the quality both in content and form.

The needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality as to learning assessment are revealed in Table 10. It displays 16 teachers who said they need technical assistance in designing learning interventions for struggling learners, and 15 teachers who said they need proper orientation or training to assess learners in the new normal. Moreover, 13 teachers said they needed clear instruction on assessing learners' progress and on modified forms for the learning assessment, while 11 teachers said they needed adequate knowledge in using the modified e-class record for the new normal.

Table 10. Needs of teachers in implementing the modular distance learning modality as to learning assessment

Indicators	f (n=20)	%
1. Technical assistance in designing learning interventions for struggling learners.	16	80
2. Proper orientation/ training in assessing learners in the new normal.	15	75
3. Clear instruction on how to assess learners' progress.	13	65
4. Modified forms for the learning assessment.	13	65
5. Adequate knowledge of using the modified E-Class record for the new normal.	11	55

Similar challenges of learning assessment in distance learning were also reported by De Villa and Manalo (2020). Likewise, Karal and Cebi (2012) emphasised that assessment for modular learning should involve online social media tools and platforms while being considered quantitatively and qualitatively.

4.3. Best Practices of teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality

Interviews and focus group discussion with the participants using Google Meet as a communication platform was conducted since there was still a threat from the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers designates an alias for each respondent to protect their privacy and confidentiality. The presentation of the interview results is according to the themes that emerged from the responses.

4.3.1. Going beyond the classroom through home visitation

Teacher Jelic said that her best practice is home visitation. She conducted home visitation to ensure pupils do their LAS and modules on time. Teacher Justine then mentioned that the teachers shall request consent from the parents before any visitation, saying, "in our school before we do home visitation, we send a letter to parents willing to have home visitation. If they consent to teacher or adviser, it is the time that the teacher or adviser will visit the learner." This is his best practice as far as learning modality is concerned. Teacher Annie responded by saying that during home visitation, she helps the student learn the lesson in the modules, similar to Teacher Robert who said that teachers facilitate learning through home visitation. During their monitoring, they see that they share knowledge through a brief discussion of the lesson using the printed materials given to the learners. Accordingly, Teacher Joe believed that home visitation is their best practice in implementing a modular distance learning modality. Meanwhile, he mentioned that the teachers would not neglect COVID-19 precautions during home visits such as wearing face masks or shields and observing social distancing.

4.3.2. Information Dissemination through online and digital platforms and frequent check-ins

Teacher Bong said his best practice is keeping positive relationships with pupils and families through frequent check-ins to ensure pupils understand the module lesson. Meanwhile, Teacher Imee, Teacher Harry, and Teacher Cynthia all expressed that the adviser and the subject teachers have group chats where the group chat members are the parents. For them, utilising technology, specifically mobile phones, is their best practice. They created group chats to communicate with the parents and pupils and initiated virtual meetings through Google Meet or Zoom to talk with the learners, to follow up on important reminders regarding their LAS, and sometimes to simply let the pupils read flash cards. Furthermore, Teacher Bong stated that "We always call our pupils thru video calls in Facebook Messenger to check if they are working with their LAS and to remind them of the schedule of distribution and retrieval. But this is only applicable to those learners with mobile phones and to the places where there is a strong internet connection."

4.3.3. More support for learners through supplementary worksheets

Teacher Maricel provided supplementary activity sheets to help the struggling learners improve their understanding of the lesson. At the same time, Teacher Jover must make or prepare weekly formative

tests to ensure that learners are studying their lessons in the modules and not merely copying the answers from the answer key included in the LAS. This is the best practice for Teacher Maricel and Teacher Jover.

4.3.4. Created mechanisms for module distribution and retrieval

Teacher Lito said they distributed and retrieved the LAS or Modules in the barangay hall in the high school. They had attendance sheets to be signed by parents once they get the envelope containing their respective LAS or modules. Once they retrieve the answer sheets, they have to sign for the second time on the attendance sheet or on a receiving copy that serves as proof that the adviser or subject teacher has received the answer sheets. Teacher Willy elaborated by saying, “in our school, the practice in distribution and retrieval of LAS is that the parent leaders are assigned to get the LAS from advisers and distribute the LAS to their group members, the same process also goes with the retrieval. The parent leaders will collect the answer sheets from the members to be returned to the adviser in the school.”

4.4. Problems encountered by the teachers in implementing modular distance learning modality

The presence of COVID-19 had the global educational system gradually changed. Philippine Education shifted the paradigm in education by utilising a new learning modality – modular instruction. The researchers presented the data gathered through an interview and a focus group discussion on the problems they have met in implementing modular distance learning modality. Teachers Bong, Jolie, Annie, and Romnick said that the problems they have encountered with modular distance learning modality emerged mainly from the COVID-19 threat during home visits. Whereby, the safety and health of both teachers and learners were at stake. Teacher Panelo said that in response, teachers were consistently advised to wear face masks and face shields. Although home visitation is risky, the teachers considered it as a part of their new normal job now for the sake of effective education.

Furthermore, teachers Louis, Maricel, Emily, and Harry said that the most complex challenge for them as teachers during the new normal is the construction of the LAS. Each LAS must undergo Quality Assurance (QA) to avoid mistakes and misrepresentation before being printed and distributed to the pupils. The QA team comprises Master's degree teachers, principals, and the district subject coordinator. LAS is a shortened version of the modules, with each having only 2 to 4 pages. Conversely, modules consist of 15 to 25 pages for every subject and printing them consumed too much time and paper. In the first year of the new normal in the education system, teachers were required to print modules of each subject for every student. The School Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) division was strained in purchasing bond papers and ink. However, after a year, the division decided to replace modules with LAS. Up to the writing of this paper, LAS is still used by teachers.

4.5. Recommendations

Given teachers' feedback on their roles, needs, and best practices, the following recommend actions were made: (1) Teachers may seek technical assistance in implementing Modular Distance Learning Modality. (2) Teachers may ask for a security escort from the authority during home visitation. (3) Department of Education may provide clear directives on the learning assessment and enhance the modules for the students. (4) The school heads must innovate to help the teachers overcome their challenges in modular distance learning modality. The school head should look for a project or activity to help the teachers. (5) An action plan proposed by the researchers based on this study for conducting a district-based seminar on teachers' roles, needs, and best practices in implementing modular distance learning modality may be submitted to the division office, tested, and implemented.

5. Conclusion

This mixed-method research executed an explanatory sequential design aimed to explore the roles, needs, and best practices of teachers in modular distance learning modality. It proposed standards for addressing the roles, needs, and best practices of teachers while introducing the current roles, needs, and best practices of teachers in Sorsogon. Based on the findings, the following conclusions were hereby drawn: (1) Teachers were very active in mentoring the students, assessing the learners, and designing instructional materials; however, they need to improve on curriculum development and the use of interactive technology. (2) Teachers' needs include instructional design, interactive technology, curriculum development, learning assessment, and mentoring; whereby they need the most assistance in instructional design and the least need in mentoring. (3) Teachers have several best practices in implementing modular distance learning modality. (4) Teachers encountered several problems in implementing modular distance learning modality. (5) The researchers proposes an action plan aimed to discuss the roles and needs of teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning modality and to adopt the teachers' best practices. Teachers encounter difficulties in adjusting to the new normal and in becoming ready for distance learning, making it more challenging to use new learning methods. Currently, the teachers struggled to get around the issues of the new normal, notwithstanding the obstacles that emerged during the implementation to continue their tasks. These difficulties should be addressed to help teachers resolve the issues and effectively fulfil their obligations as learning facilitators and meet the needs of the new learning modality.

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