School Heads' Perspectives on Modular Distance Learning in Philippine Public and Private Basic Education Schools

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to get an in-depth understanding on school heads' perspectives on modular distance learning in Philippine public and private basic education schools. The objective of this study is how School Heads address Modular Distance Learning through curricular and assessment priorities, flexible learning options, family Empowerment for home-based learning, resilience and innovation, learning environment redesign, and new knowledge creation. The researchers used descriptive design to describe the perspectives of school heads in modular distance learning. The study shows that most public and private school heads perceived modular distance learning as helpful and beneficial to teachers and students. It aided and linked teachers and students in disseminating the lessons. With modular distance learning, students were given enough time frame to finish their modules aside from doing their house chores. Module content can readily be assessed and credit-given. Hence, recognition of prior learning and credit transfer is facilitated.

Keywords: *Education, modular distance learning, school head, descriptive design, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

A major revamp in Philippine education occurred when the Philippines Republic Act 10533 otherwise known as An Act Enhancing the Philippine Basic Education System by Strengthening its Curriculum and Increasing the Number of Years for Basic Education, Appropriating Funds therefore and for other Purposes was passed as law. This law is simplified to what all Filipinos know today as the K-12 Education Curriculum.

The K-12 law stipulates that the Department of Education shall adhere to levels of standards and principles in developing the curriculum. Its main principle revolves around the idea of transforming the learning environment into a more learner-centered one. But one key element of the principles behind the law states that the curriculum shall be relevant, responsive, and research-based. This clearly states that DepEd should create a curriculum that is more holistic than the previous curriculum. Most Filipinos see the law merely with its additional two years in basic education. Based on the said statements, it is clear that the law wishes to have Filipino learners who are adept in the real -world situations.

Education is a fundamental right of every citizen. Moreover, according to ARTICLE XIV Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution, "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education accessible to all.". Thus, in

response to issue of quality education the Department of Education implemented the K-12 program.

It is a known fact that education, in general, is considered as a dynamic one. Dynamic in the sense that it always changes depending on the call of the times. As such, Philippine education is also subjected to the changes that are constantly happening in the field of learning and academics. This basic premise is under close scrutiny in this day and age as the world experiences a debilitating disease that practically arrested the flow of learning and education.

The newly identified coronavirus was named the 2019-novel coronavirus which was first discovered in Wuhan, China in December 2019. On February 11, 2020, the 2019-novel coronavirus was officially named SARS-CoV-2 by the World Health Organization (WHO), also known as the COVID-19 (Guo et al., 2020). The COVID-19 is not just causing health crises around the world, but it is also affecting all spheres of life, including the field of education. Educators resorted to online platforms to reach out to students, webinars became a temporary classroom, parents were called for monitoring at home, and students got deprived of social interaction among peers.

Today's workforce is expected to be highly educated and continually improve skills and acquire new ones by engaging in lifelong learning. E-learning, here defined as learning and teaching online through network technologies, is arguably one of the most powerful responses to the growing need for education (Zhang et al., 2004). Some researchers have expressed concern about the learning outcomes for e-learners. Still, a review of 355 comparative studies reveals no significant difference in learning outcomes, commonly measured as grades or exam results, between traditional and e-learning modes of delivery (Russell, 2001).

The WHO advised educators and students to conduct alternative learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak to mitigate school cancellation of classes through providing a resource list of the World Bank's Edtech teams to provide some online materials that can be used during the pandemic. The program aims to elevate the loss of learning and provide remote learning opportunities while schools are closed. Furthermore, the mandate provides guiding principles and delivery of online classes and approaches to be given by stakeholders like teachers and parents (World Bank, 2020).

It is with these basic premises that the researcher wishes to delve into the very nature of the new learning modality that is being offered to address the challenges posed by remote learning. This research is in response to the current move of the Department of Education to continue with the learning despite and amidst the Corona Virus. The response of the Department of Education involves the launching of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) that

covers the essential requirements of education during this time of the pandemic.

Responding to the call of WHO, the Department of Education (DepEd, Philippines), created a series of DepEd Memorandum (DM) No. 15, 21, 23, 31 and 34 in the first quarter of 2020 entitled "Creation of a Task Force for the Management of Department of Education Response to Novel Coronavirus Acute Respiratory Disease (2019-nCoV ARD)" (Department of Education, 2020). The DepEd, Philippines, also created a learning website called DepEd Commons catering for Alternative Learning School (ALS) students, Out-of-School-Youth (OSYA), regular learners from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The online learning hub is available both for public and private schools all over the country. The website aims to reinforce education anytime and anywhere suitable for learners who have access to the internet using equipment such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers (Department of Education, 2020).

Without a doubt, the pandemic still is a looming concern for all educators. The future of Philippine education is still in the mix of things as the Philippine government race to address other matters like the economic and political amidst this pandemic. Though attention was given to the field of education by virtue of the BE-LCP, the uncertainty of the future still poses a great challenge in the readiness and preparedness of the academic institutions in dealing with the remote learning modality.

The COVID-19 pandemic led educators to online education readiness. According to Phan and Dang (2017), factors such as training, attitude, technical competence, time constraints, pedagogy, and methodology were among the major distance learning education elements. In a study conducted by Ventayen (2018) on the readiness of DepEd Teachers to online teaching, showed that despite the limited experience in distance education such as technical skills, time management, knowledge and attitude in online education, they were still able to cope with the trends in distance learning. Moreover, readiness and satisfaction levels were also found among prospective teachers in other countries like Turkey and Thailand in terms of web-based education (Ozturk et al., 2018; Akarawang et al., 2015). Further, in the study on the response from 205 online faculty of higher institutions in the United States in terms of readiness, attitude and ability to teach online in terms of course design, course communication, time management and technical aspects most of the responses were rated high (Marti et al., 2019).

Teachers are on the front lines, but the School Heads are the ones that create the plan of action for the teachers to follow. It is a noteworthy activity to also understand the readiness of the school heads as well as the schools in dealing with this new normal set up in education. With this, it is the hope of the researcher to evaluate the perception of the school heads regarding the readiness of the teachers and of the schools in dealing with the demands of remote learning

which is integrated into the current state of education in the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study described the perspectives on modular distance learning in public and private basic education schools in the Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research aims to understand the school heads' perspectives on modular distance learning in Philippine public and private basic education schools. Our goal is to describe the perspective of school heads in modular distance learning.

This study would also use the descriptive design in the collection, interpretation and analysis of data gathered. According to Shuttleworth (2008), this design is a scientific method that involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way. The main goal of this type of research is to describe the data and characteristics about what is being studied. Descriptive research is mainly done when a researcher wants to gain a better understanding of a topic. Considering the fact that this research determined the parental involvement of parents in school activities, the descriptive method of research was the most appropriate.

Respondents

The subjects of the study were the 45 public and 45 private school heads among Isabela, Pangasinan and Tarlac. They were selected through convenience sampling with 30 teachers from each province selected from a list, 15 from private schools and 15 from public schools, totaling to 90 respondents in total. This was chosen as the best means to convene the number of respondents as the researchers considered the restrictions as posed by the quarantine classification brought about by the pandemic. This method proved to be the safest way to convene the respondents in this time of the pandemic.

Instrument

The research instruments used in gathering the pertinent data are online questionnaires via Google Forms that are distributed through the use of electronic mail, Google drive, or private messaging in Facebook.

Data Gathering Procedure

The first step taken to gather the necessary data was securing a permission to conduct the study from concerned authorities. Letters of request to this effect were prepared for the Division Superintendent, and Public Schools District Supervisors. Afterward, the acquired permission to conduct the study was forwarded to the subjects of the study. To launch the study, personal inquiry by means of interview by using Google Meet and Zoom among the respondents were conducted to deepen the understanding of the researchers about the answers of the respondents in their questionnaire.

The research instruments used in gathering the data is an online questionnaire disseminated through the use of Google form and interviews. To this effect, this would help the researchers to know further how the respondents answer on how they perceived modular distance learning.

Data Analysis

This part of the study shows the data gathered and their corresponding analyses. The data gathered from the questionnaires were tabulated, organized, and tallied for analysis and interpretation. The frequency distribution and percentage were also used to determine the general average percentage of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Module-clarity

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	32	71	39	86
Agree	13	29	6	14
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	45	100	45	100

Table 1 shows the numerical comparison between the perception of public school head and private school heads if the learners received clear information and guidance on what the module covers and the assessment's details.

Having the same sample, thirty-nine private school heads or 86% strongly agreed that their learners received clear information and guidance on what the module covered and on assessment details. In the public school scene, thirty-two public school heads 71% strongly agree with the premise as well.

On the other hand, no one disagreed nor strongly disagreed for both public and private school heads that learners received clear information and guidance about the module and the assessment details.

From this data, the researchers concluded that even under Modular Distance learning, clear and effective information dissemination is still a must.

Table 2. Learners' understanding

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	26	57	26	57
Agree	6	14	13	29
Disagree	13	29	6	14
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	45	100	45	100

Table 2 projects the numerical comparison between the perception of public school heads and private school heads on the learners' increased understanding of the subject as a result of taking the module.

There are twenty-six out of forty-five respondents for both public and private school heads or 57% who strongly agreed that their learners have increased their understanding of the subject towards modular distance learning.

On the other hand, no one strongly disagreed for both public and private school heads that learners have increased their understanding of the subject with the use of modular distance learning materials. However, there are thirteen public school heads or 29%, and one private school head, who disagreed that learners increased their understanding of the subjects under modular distance.

These results imply that even under Modular Distance Learning, student's knowledge and development are still being advanced; however, the process of developing this aspect needs further improvement and progress.

Table 3. Promotion of skills

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	19	43	26	57
Agree	13	29	6	14
Disagree	13	29	13	29
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	45	100	45	100

It can be seen in Table 3 the numerical comparison between the perception of public school heads and private school heads in terms of whether using modules helped the learners to develop skills that will help employability or career. The result of this study clearly mirrors the idea presented by Estrada (2021) that emphasized the idea that the modules should include sections on motivation and assessment that serve as a complete guide for both the teacher's and students' desired competencies.

There are nineteen public school heads and twenty-six private school heads who strongly agreed that modules enabled learners to develop their skills that will help their employability and career.

Moreover, no one strongly disagreed for both public and private school heads that modules enabled learners develop their skills that will help their employability and career. However, there are thirteen public and private school heads or 29% each who disagreed that modules could develop or enable learners' employability and career.

The results imply that even under Modular Distance Learning, learners could still work on improving their employability and career, but are still somewhat hindered in doing so. With this, to make it more efficient and effective, modules should be improved in terms where the necessary skills are being developed.

Table 4. Timeliness of the modules

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	26	57	32	71
Agree	6	14	6	14
Disagree	13	29	6	14
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	45	100	45	100

Table 4 reflects the numerical comparison between the perception of public school heads and private school heads in terms of the content of the module being up to date.

There are twenty-six public school heads and thirty-two private school heads who strongly agreed with the premise that the content of the modules is up to date.

On the other hand, no one strongly disagreed for both public and private school heads that modules' content is up to date but there are thirteen public school heads or 29% and only one private school head who disagreed with it.

These results imply that even under Modular Distance Learning, the content of the modules being self-learned by the students is up to date but with some contentions held by other school heads. These findings are aligned with the article by Magsambol (2021) that indicated the contentions found from among the learning modules as provided by the department of Education. What this means is that even with the stringent quality assurance placed forth to check on the contents of the self- learning materials. There are still unforeseen human errors in the way the modules were drafted and printed. The article may be a good reflection of the perception of the school heads regarding the contentions and minor apprehensions they have regarding the modules. This implies that the most, and not all, of the module content is up to date. Therefore, the content development could be more improved to cater to the timely needs of the students and the fast-paced demands of the world.

Table 5. Module- relevance

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	32	71	32	71
Agree	13	29	13	29
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	45	100	45	100

Table 5 shows the numerical comparison between the perception of public school heads and private school heads on the premise that the modules are relevant to the course.

Having the same sample, thirty-two public school heads and thirty-two private school heads, both comprising 71% of the respondent population, strongly agreed that modules are relevant to the course under Modular Distance Learning.

On the other hand, no one disagreed nor strongly disagreed for both public and private school heads that modules are relevant to each of the courses they are offering.

This implies that even under Modular Distance learning, modules given to the learners are still relevant to what course or stand they are currently taking.

Table 6. Student engagement

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	26	57	19	43
Agree	6	14	13	29
Disagree	13	29	13	29
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	45	100	45	100

The data in Table 6 reflects how the public and private school heads perceive the module subject matter to be interesting. This table shows the perceived engagement of the learners with regards to the initiative of the teachers in making the subject matter interesting.

Among ninety respondents from public and private, a majority with 26 public school heads and 19 private school heads strongly agree that the teachers have made the presentation of the subject matter interesting. However, there are 13 public school heads and private school heads each who disagree with the premise.

These results imply that there is still room for improvement for the teachers in terms of making their subject presentation interesting and engaging to the learners. This result is also indicative of the statement of Estrada (2021) that it is indeed challenging for the learners to absorb new information when there is no one there to guide the learners when the demands of the modules become to challenging to handle.

Table 7. Efficacy of teachers

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	26	57	19	43
Agree	6	14	6	14
Disagree	13	29	19	43
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	45	100	45	100

Table 7 reflects the numerical comparison between how the public school heads and private school heads perceive the teachers to be good at explaining things.

Among the 45 public school heads and 45 private school heads, 26 and 19 respondents respectively strongly agree with the premise that the teachers were adept at explaining things in lessons. While there were no school heads who strongly disagreed to this notion, there were 13 public school heads and 19 private school heads who disagree with the premise that the teachers were good at explaining. This is actually aligned to the statements of Estrada (2021) that states the lack of feedback coming from the teachers regarding the modules that were returned to the students. This statement when contextualized to the study at hand explains the perceptions of some of the school heads regarding the inability of some teachers to communicate the content and elements of the printed modules to the learners.

This part of the result of the study also somehow mirrors the idea of Magsambol (2021) who mentioned the seemingly poor skills of the teachers who made the modules when it comes to the language mechanic of grammar. The grammatical errors found on the modules are the results of the lack of skills of the teachers in drafting standard modules for the leaners.

As such, what these results imply is that while the teachers are good at explaining lessons, they could still be better; thus, the teachers need to develop their effective communication skills more.

Table 8. Stimulating modules

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	*f*	%
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0
Agree	6	14	13	29
Disagree	19	43	6	14
Strongly Disagree	26	57	19	43
	45	100	45	100

Table 8 is concerned with how the public school heads and private school heads perceive the module to be intellectually stimulating.

For this premise, there are no school heads from both public and private schools who strongly agree that the module was intellectually stimulating. There are, however, 6 public school heads and 13 private school heads who agree on this premise. But the general perception of the school heads is that they strongly disagree on the modules being intellectually stimulating, with 26 public school heads and 19 private school heads.

With such results, it can be reasonably inferred that the teachers and module developers need to work on making the modules more intellectually stimulating, challenging, and engaging to learners.

Table 9. Helpfulness of modules

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	13	29	19	43
Agree	19	43	13	29
Disagree	19	43	13	29
Strongly Disagree	6	14	0	0
	45	100	45	100

Table 9 reflects the numerical comparison of how the public school heads and private school heads perceive how the teaching methods used in the module helped the students learn the material effectively. The teaching methods used on this module have helped learners to learn

For this premise, the general perception of the respondents is split between Agree and Disagree. 19 public school heads and 13 private school heads expressed their agreement towards the premise that the teaching methods helped the learners study. Interestingly, the same exact frequencies for both public and private school heads also expressed their disagreement on the premise.

However, 13 public school heads and 19 private school heads strongly agree with this premise, with only 6 public school heads and 0 private school heads strongly disagreeing.

This interesting outcome suggests that while most of the school heads agree on the teaching methods being effective, the methods still need to be sharpened and improved in order to ensure that no learner is left behind in understanding the lessons being taught.

Table 10. Teaching quality of modules

Description	Public School Heads		Private School Heads	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	0	0%	0	0%
Agree	13	0%	26	57%
Disagree	19	0%	13	29%
Strongly Disagree	13	0%	6	14%
	45	100%	45	100%

Finally, table 10 shows the numerical comparison of how the public school heads and private school heads perceive the quality of the teaching of the module.

For this premise, there are no school heads from both public and private schools who strongly agree. However, there are 13 public school heads and 26 private school heads who agree that the modules were taught well, while there are 19 public school heads and 13 private school heads who disagree. Moreover, there are 13 public school heads and 6 private school heads who strongly disagree with the modules being taught well.

What these results imply is that the school heads generally disagree on the quality of the teaching of the modules, and that teachers should put more effort toward improving their teaching method, so that the module's corresponding content could be delivered well to the students. This is again directly related to the statement of Estrade (2021) that clearly addressed the effectiveness of the modules. Estrada (2021) mentioned that with the major gaps found in the modules and in the modular distance learning modality, the effectiveness of the modules is questionable. Furthermore, she mentioned that the modular learning approach together with the use of the modules has several weak spots that need to be properly addressed to make this type of learning modality viable for the millions of the Filipino learners.

CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that most public and private school heads perceived modular distance learning as helpful and beneficial to teacher and students. It aided and linked teachers and students in disseminating the lessons. With modular distance learning, students were given enough time frame to finish their modules aside from doing their house chores. The modules themselves aren't perfect. They differ from school to school, and their contents depend on the teachers who made them. Some students may not have a problem understanding their lessons because of a well-explained module, but others may not be as lucky. With the lack of standard books used, the level of learning varies. Module content can readily be assessed and credit given, hence recognition of prior learning and credit transfer are facilitated. Nonetheless, the results of this study also confirms the statement of Estrada (2021) that says modules need to be properly assessed by the teachers to give the learners ample feedback for improvement.

Overall, modular distance learning is the best alternative from face to face learning because of our current situation. However, while the general outcome points to Modular Learning's effectiveness, the data also suggest that the practice

could still be improved. Again, this conclusion is aligned with the contention of Estrada (2021) that mentioned the idea of the need to addressing the weak spots of the modules and modular learning modality to create a more suitable learning experience for the Filipino learners. There are a lot more challenges concerning modular learning, but these are the most prevalent. Both the students and the teachers are at a disadvantage. The quality of education, however hard it is to admit, may have dropped. But because we're still in the middle of a pandemic, it's not their fault. Learning is hard when done on your own.

This is also connected to the statement of Magsambol (2021) that highlighted the need to address the mishaps and errors in the modules to create a more standardized learning resources for the Filipino learners.

In correspondence to Ventayen (2018)'s study that DepEd Teachers were still able to cope with the trends of distance learning, this current study implies the need for further development of the teachers in terms of training, attitude, technical competence, time management, pedagogy, and methodology (Phan & Dang, 2017).

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