The Effectiveness of Modular Distance Learning Modality to the Academic Performance of Students: A Literature Review

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a historical disturbance in the delivery of education in the Philippines. The major purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of modular distance learning modality to the Academic Performance of Students on its more than a year implementation. This paper viewed several articles discussing the role of modular distance learning modality in the performance of students, the positive and negative effects of MDL, and the parent’s perception with regards on the implementation of the said modality.

Keywords: Covid-19, Modular distance learning, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION
The year 2020 has been a remarkable period when the Philippines has on the peak of struggle as the Covid-19 virus continues to find its way to disrupt the economy, health, culture, and education in the country. The increasing number of infected people and the threat of the new strains of the coronavirus has forced the government to still ban the face-to-face classes. As a result, Modular Distance Learning becomes the widely used modality in consideration to the learners in areas where the internet is inaccessible for online learning.

As cited by Ragandang (2020), Our country ranked eleventh slowest in upload speed and sixteenth slowest in download speed among 87 countries; while named 21st or 72.4 percent — leveled from those of Albania, Brazil, and Tunisia, among others — in terms of 4G availability (Mercurio, 2020). By this result, it can be concluded that online distance learning is not applicable to use by students all over the country due to the slow rate of upload and download speed.

In addition to the data gathered via DepEd’s National Learner Enrolment and Survey Forms (LESFs), 8.8 million (39.6% of total respondents) out of the 22.2 million enrollees preferred modular distance learning for the upcoming school year. Meanwhile, 3.9 million enrollees (17.6%) were partial to blended learning (which uses a combination of different modalities), 3.8 million (17.1%) preferred online learning, and 1.4 million and 900,000 enrollees preferred TV-based and radio-based learning, respectively. Due to this concern, the modular Learning modality has been widely used by all public schools in the Philippines.

Modular learning is a form of distance learning that uses Self-Learning Modules (SLM) and is highly
convenient for most typical Filipino students. It was also the most preferred learning system of the majority of parents/guardians for their children. The SLM is based on the most essential learning competencies (MELCS) provided by the Department of Education.

In modular distance learning, the teachers take the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners. The students may ask assistance from the teacher via email, telephone, and text message/instant messaging. For those students who experience difficulties, the teacher will give remedial activities.

Since education takes place at home, the parents play a vital role as facilitators. Their primary function is modular learning is to establish a connection and guide to their child. (Flip Science, 2020).

According to the Meta-analysis on the effects of Distance Learning on K-12 students’ outcomes (Cavanaugh, Gillan, Kronmey, Hess, Blomeyer, 2004), Distance education is somehow as effective as classroom instruction. In other words, students who undergo online or modular distance learning can have a quality education provided that the basic needs are met.

However, in the study conducted by (Olivo, 2021), parents claimed that time allotment in the completion of learning activities was insufficient since the activities were so many. In addition, some parents said that some topics in the modules are so hard to ven for them and they cannot help and guide their children in answering the learning tasks. The research then recommended a review of the learning activities and conduct seminars for parents to guide them in assisting their children during their “classes” at home.

This article will be emphasized the negative and positive effects of modular distance learning both in international and local areas to assess the effectiveness of MDL with regards to the level of academic performance of students.

**DISCUSSIONS**

A module has clearly defined, objectives; preferably in behavioral form (Daries, 1981).

Taneja (1989) defined module as a unit of work in a course of instruction that is virtually self-contained and a method of teaching that is based on the concept of building up skills and knowledge in discrete units. A module is a set of learning opportunities organized around a well-defined topic that contains the elements of instruction, specific objectives, teaching-learning activities, and evaluation using criterion-referenced measures (UNESCO, 1988).

In the study conducted by Ali et al., (2010), entitled “Effectiveness of modular teaching at Secondary level”, it appears that the modular learning groups perform significantly better than the group taught by the traditional method of teaching. The Modularization also promoted positive changes in teaching style. The result of the study was in favor of modular distance learning thus it is recommended to use this approach in conventional classrooms at various levels of education.

Furthermore, (Sadiq and Zamir, 2014), proved that modular teaching is a more effective approach in teaching university students of Master in Educational Planning and Management. This method can be applied widely to other fields and subjects as well as other levels of education because this approach can fulfill the diversified needs of learning of students of all levels.

Moreover, Sadiq (2014) states in her study that modular teaching is more effective on university students in the teaching-learning process as compared to ordinary teaching methods. Because in this modular approach the students learn at their own pace.

In the article by Aksan (2021) entitled “The Effect of Modular Distance Learning Approach to Academic Performance in Mathematics of Students in Mindanao State University- Sulu Senior High School,” it was revealed that the academic grades in Mathematics of the STEM students treated by modular approach achieved very satisfactory in the school year 2019-2020. The study revealed the effectiveness of the modular distance learning approach in learning Math despite its challenges amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Likewise, the result of the study of Gonzales (2015) determined that the use of the modular teaching approach was more effective than the traditional method of instruction. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic where no face-to-face classes can take place and with the problems in the use of the internet and technology, modular distance learning is the best option to continue delivering education that could yield good results.

On the contrary, the results of the study of Dargo & Dimas (2021), concluded that the academic performance of learners after the implementation of Modular Distance Learning (MDL) decreased. This only means that face-to-face is more effective and favorable on the part of the learners. It was also determined that there were more negative effects of MDL than positive ones. Based on the respondents used in the study, they cited the reasons how the modular distance learning creates a negative impact on the learning among the students. First, limited interaction between the teacher and the learners. Lastly, too many tasks/activities incorporated in the modules.

To address the limitation of MDL, it was hereby recommended to have constant monitoring of teachers via home visitation to assess the progress of the students as well as those who need special attention.
simplification of worksheets and workbooks to be distributed to the learners, and creation of video lesson aligned with Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC). It was also stated that there should be an open forum among parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to explain the real scenario of the new normal education.

In the article, “The Challenges and Status of Modular Learning: Its Effect to Students’ Academic Behavior and Performance” by Agarin (2021), it was inferred that the teacher’s physical interaction with the learners influence the learners’ academic performance.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Noting the results of the studies conducted by the previous researchers, they have determined the effectiveness and shortcomings of modular distance learning (MDL). The following are the sum-up of the causes of the positive impact of MDL on students who experienced the new normal education. First, it fulfills the diversified needs of learning of students of all levels. Second, students learn at their own pace. Lastly, the modularization promoted positive changes in teaching style.

However, some studies have shown the negative impact of modular distance learning which resulted in the decreased rate of academic performance of students. Parents had claimed that time allotment to finish the learning tasks, too many activities incorporated in the modules, less interaction of the teachers and learners, and educational attainment of parents were the reasons for their hard time as facilitators to their children.

Upon learning the strength and weaknesses of MDL, the school administrators, Local Government Unit (LGU), and Department of Education (DepEd) officials should address the needs of students, parents as well as teachers to have efficient and effective delivery of education amidst the health crisis that everyone is experiencing right now.

This literature review article will serve as future resources for another related research. Future researchers may consider the findings and variables used in gathering data. Others may conduct additional studies to elaborate on the effectiveness of MDL in the academic performance of the students.

REFERENCES