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The Line between Online and Modular: Onset of the Distance Learning Amidst Pandemic

ABSTRACT: As the COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease of 2019) struck the Philippines, educational institutions were among the severely affected sectors in the society. This led the Department of Education to adapt the learning continuity plan to continue learning despite the ongoing pandemic. This study investigated the experiences of the grade 7 Araling Panlipunan, Asian Studies teacher, student, and parent during the Implementation of the Distance Learning Modality in the School year 2020-2021 in a secondary school in Metro Manila, Philippines. As a result, the study discovered that the teacher participant currently handles both modular and online distance learning which generates distinct experiences. This also generated challenges such as lack of rapport with the students and their parents. On the other hand, challenges that include access to gadgets and stable internet, and difficulty in coping with the schedule made the learner participant transfer from ODLE (Online Distance Learning) to the MDL (Modular Distance Learning). However, the learner participant still utilizes online learning materials as one of the strategies to cope with the inadequacy and difficulty of the SLM (Self-Learning Modules). Moreover, parents play a significant role as they are the provider of the student's needs and they serve as a para-teacher in the absence of the teacher's guide. The teacher, students, parents and other stakeholders should build a strong communication channel to respond to their needs, to deliver meaningful and effective learning during the implementation of distance learning.

KEY WORDS: Modular and Online Distance Learning; Grade 7; Self-Regulated Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The widespread of COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease of 2019) pandemic has impacted different aspects of life. Educational Institutions were among sectors that were severely affected by the COVID-19

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pandemic. Different community lockdown measures forced the closure of schools worldwide, which affected 1.2 billion students worldwide. Among this figure were 28 million Filipino students (UNESCO, 2020).

However, despite the challenges in educational institutions, the need to continue the students' learning process should be prioritized. The rapid transition from on-campus face-to-face classes to online distance learning sessions took place as a response to emergency remote learning, whereas M.D. Rahiem (2020) explains that it is a shift from traditional delivery to alternative delivery. With the use of technologies and modules, students can continue learning despite not attending physical classes. Homes will be the new classroom, the internet will be their mode of instruction, and the teachers will teach virtually to fill the demands in this learning (Rahiem, 2020).

Kecia Ray (2020) explains also that this mode of learning provides an opportunity for teachers and students to remain connected despite the health crisis that the world is facing. This kind of approach will be student-centered, but their respective teachers will monitor the activities (Ray, 2020).

In the Philippines, the DepEd (Department of Education) released a department order no.12 s. 2020 entitled "Adoption of the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021 in Light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency" last June 2020. The goal of the BE-LCP (Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan) is to continue learning amidst the pandemic while ensuring the safety and well-being of the whole educational stakeholders. Moreover, the Department of Education implemented the Creation of a Task Force for the Management of Department of Education Response to Novel Coronavirus Acute Respiratory Disease or 2019-nCoV ARD (DepEd of Philippines, 2020a).

DepEd also made use of its online platform, the DepEd commons, which provides accessible online educational materials (Alea *et al.*, 2020). Aside from this in education, classroom-based learning and instruction shift to distance learning as an alternative learning system. Distance education is an institutional-based, formal education where the learners and instructors are separated and utilizes telecommunication systems to connect with learners, instructors, and resources (Simonson *et al.*, 2009).

The MELCs (Most Essential Learning Competencies) were derived from the K-12 curriculum and was used nationwide for the school year 2020-2021, which aims to lessen the burden of requirements for adapting classroom-based learning resources for distance learning and to deliver quality, relevant and liberating education amid the COVID-19 pandemic (DepEd of Philippines, 2020b). Along with this, DepEd also

implemented Distance Learning as a process of instruction. Under distance learning, DepEd offered multiple learning modalities that include ODL (Online Distance Learning) and MDL (Modular Distance Learning).

Online Distance Learning. The ODL (Online Distance Learning) is one of the popular forms used in distance learning (Berg & Simonson, 2016). M. Bakia *et al.* (2012) defined online learning as an instructional environment that needs an internet connection. It includes a wide variety of materials and online platforms that students and teachers can access within or outside the classroom to facilitate learning. Online distance learning promotes active participation due to the fact that it provides real-time teacher-learner and peer-to-peer communication and interaction (Bakia *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, teachers facilitate and give instruction during synchronous learning while students can download, accomplish and submit their assignments and activities online (DepEd of Philippines, 2020c).

Several factors need to be considered in this type of modality, such as the resources and the skills that the students and teachers should have possess as ODL is enhanced by technological advancements such as the emerging 5G technology, utilizing online platforms, interactive applications, and live radio and television broadcast (Vishkaie, 2020). Although technology helps overcome geographical barriers, this also arises from another barrier called the digital divide (Rosenblit, 2009).

The transition to emergency distance learning led to several factors that hinder the learning process of the student. According to A.V. Alvarez, Jr. (2020), having a poor internet connection, financial constraint, inadequate technological devices that can be used in online learning, and lack of emotional support are the factors that hinder the learning of the students in most developing countries such as the Philippines (Alvarez Jr., 2020).

In the study conducted by C. Francisco & M. Barcelona (2020) in investigating the effectiveness of an online classroom for flexible learning, they found that web-based classroom such as Eliademy promotes time-management, punctuality, and challenges to the user although it requires a strong internet connection, they concluded that Eliademy could be used as an alternative tool for teaching and learning (Francisco & Barcelona, 2020).

In addition, Ethel Reyes-Chua *et al.* (2020), in the study on the status of the implementation of the E-learning classroom in selected higher education institutions in Region IV-A, Philippines amidst the COVID-19 crisis, revealed that students have a positive response in online learning although online platforms are free to use by the students, the lack of internet connectivity and gadgets still emerged (Reyes-Chua *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, [S. Bedenlier et al. \(2020\)](#) stated that the use of technology in online learning could either promote an effective engagement among students or lead them to an overwhelming feeling and disengagement from learning. [S. Gares, J. Kariuki & B. Rempel \(2020\)](#) defines student engagement in distance learning as excellent class attendance, participation in online activities, and completion of assignments. [E. Sumuer \(2018\)](#) noted that a distance learning environment enables the learners to accommodate their own, learn in their own time and space, and have more control over their learning ([Sumuer, 2018](#); [Bedenlier et al., 2020](#); [Gares, Kariuki & Rempel, 2020](#)).

Information and communication technology provides learners with a wide variety of access to worldwide information resources and opportunities, collaborative content creation ([McLoughlin & Lee, 2010](#)). Moreover, the learners can explore, express, share their thoughts, and benefit from their self-improvement, which leads to self-directed learning. It is stated that the use of computer-based learning helps the students in interacting, collaborating, and communicating with others comfortably and more efficiently through asynchronous and synchronous tools.

Meanwhile, [A. Smits & J. Voogt \(2017\)](#) mentioned in their study the online teaching roles such as pedagogical, facilitator, instructional designer, social, managerial, and technical in which the teachers are required to possess in order to be able to teach in an online setting. However, the same challenges experienced by students, [A. Lorenzo \(2016\)](#) mentioned in his research, public schools in the Philippines, especially in remote areas, lack in affordance of the resources, the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) facilities are not highly developed, and most teachers are not digitally literate that cause poor student and school performance ([Lorenzo, 2016](#); [Smits & Voogt, 2017](#)).

Modular Distance Learning. The Department of Education (2020) defined MDL (Modular Distance Learning) as an independent instruction that utilizes SLMs (Self Learning Modules) in printed or digital form. Aside from the SLMs, MDL also uses other learning materials such as textbooks, study guides, and activity sheets to cope with the learners' context and needs. In the MDL, the educator has the responsibility to monitor the learning progress of the students. On the other hand, the learners can ask for the teachers' assistance through electronic mails, an instant messaging application, or a telephone. This modality also obliged the parents to serve as the para-teachers that will support the students' learning while at their home's confines ([DepEd of Philippines, 2020a](#)).

Modules serve as an individualized instruction that contains activities that guide the learners to learn and understand a specific subject. Due to

its individualized instructions, the modules should have comprehensive instructions, specific objectives, teaching and learning activities, and evaluation that utilizes criteria-based reference to guide the learners properly (Nardo, 2017).

In addition, K. Sejpal (2013) described module as an independent, self-confined, self-instructional material suitable for matured learners that has a well-defined objectives, concerned with individual differences, structured sequence of knowledge, systematically organize the learning opportunities, utilize a variety of media, stimulate active participation of the learners, provide immediate reinforcement, mastery of evaluation strategies, and evaluate the output of the learner. Aside from the characteristics, Learners can use it in the learning environment of their choice and manage their learning (Sejpal, 2013).

Furthermore, R. Shearer (2003) defined printed modules as the most versatile medium of content delivery in distance learning. Among its advantages is the ease in its distribution and being user-friendly, as it is widely known and utilized in the educational field. Print also allows learners to learn at their own pace (Shearer, 2003:281-282).

Statement of the Problem. This research sought to describe the distance learning experiences of key players as an emergency response during the COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease of 2019) pandemic. It specifically sought to answer the following research questions: (1) How is remote learning experienced by the Teachers, the Pupils/Students, and the Parents/Carers?; (2) What were the challenges and opportunities for learning *Araling Asyano* generated by remote learning?; and (3) What did the teacher, parents, and learners want changed and/or improved as a result of their remote learning experience?

Significance of the Study. The purpose of the study was to describe the experiences of Grade 7 students, teacher and parents as they underwent from ODL (Online Distance Learning) to MDL (Modular Distance Learning) in Emergency Remote Learning in the Philippines. Along with this, the researchers aim to distinguish the strengths and the weaknesses of both modalities and how these things can fill the gap between one another. Through gathering several data that will reach the aim of the study to further discover how modular distance learning and online distance learning are experienced amidst the health crisis as well their challenges and coping mechanisms. This study would be beneficial for the educational stakeholders for further improvement of the design and implementation of modular distance learning.

Scope and Delimitation. The study focused and limited on the Grade 7 students', parents' and teacher's experience of online distance learning and shift to modular distance learning in the subject *Araling Panlipunan* in the NCR (National Capital Region). As Students in grade 7 transition

from primary to secondary school, they are also subjected to the implementation of distance learning modalities, which gives them a different set of challenges. Moreover, researchers view that *Araling Panlipunan* plays a significant role in achieving civic competence, making it worthy of scrutiny in this study.

METHOD

Research Design. The researchers utilized the Exploratory Research Design to gain insights regarding the teacher, students, and parents' experiences during modular distance learning implementation. According to P. Leavy (2017), exploratory research design aims to gain insight and fill the gaps in a new or understudied topic of phenomena. Furthermore, this type of research design does not conclude in a conclusive result, but may prompt other studies to be conducted to understand a topic or a phenomenon better (*cf* Leavy, 2017:5; Thomas & Lawal, 2020).

Participants. The participants of the study are 15 Grade 7 students, 13 parents, and 1 teacher, who underwent from online distance learning to modular distance learning in the subject *Araling Panlipunan* Asian Studies, located in the NCR (National Capital Region). Grade 7 students together with their teacher and parents were chosen by the researchers, due to their transition from the primary to the secondary school, which makes it worthy of scrutiny.

Data Gathering Procedure. The data gathering procedure is divided into two (2) parts, where the researchers will conduct a qualitative data gathering by having an online interview for the teacher and phone call interview for the modular students and parents.

(a) *Phone Call Interview.* The interview took place over the phone, because it is more convenient for modular students to do so. Each researcher was assigned to designated students and parents participants; they will facilitate the discussion and keep the session in a positive mood. The moderator went over each participant's rights, including the privacy of their data that would be published in the report. The researchers asked the participants if they may be contacted again for more information on their responses after the interview.

(b) *Online Interview for Teacher.* For the convenience of the teacher participant, the researchers used Google Meet. A link to the meeting was sent to the teacher participant's email and personal Facebook account, so that they can be informed about the activity. The primary questions were asked by the meeting moderators, and follow-up will be done by the other research members. After the interview takes place, transcription and analysis of the data were conducted.

Data Analysis. The researchers analyzed the data they have collected from interviews and FGD (Focus Group Discussions) through thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis is a method that leads to identifying and analyzing the themes or patterns that surfaced in the collected data. It also contains data transcriptions, coding, analysis and such (Anderson *et al.*, 2021).

The data analysis process was as follows: (1) Researchers transcribed the data collected through FGD and the phone call interview. The recorded interview helped in the transcription of raw data. Next, (2) the researchers coded the transcribed interview and generated themes; (3) Researchers noted themes and patterns from data collected, which helped answer the online and modular approach in learning. Lastly, (4) Researchers summarized by linking and corroborating themes from data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Onset of the Distance Learning amidst Pandemic. The enrollment of the learners was held on June 1-20, 2020. Upon enrollment, learners' parents/guardians were required to provide information through the LESF (Learner Enrolment and Survey Form). Through this critical information, the Department of Education and the schools will be able to adapt to the needs of the learners when it comes to the learning modality, strategy, and support (DepEd of Philippines, 2020b:6). These efforts to know the demographics of the learners are significant to appropriately adapt to their needs, mostly to the learners who were from the marginalized sector of the society (Aguiera & Nightengale-Lee, 2020:471-478; Devilla & Manalo, 2020).

Prior to the School Year 2020-2021, the school administered an orientation for the learners. The said orientation was conducted through the official Facebook group of the school and was done by grade level. During the orientation, important information such as the teacher's name in grade, schedule of synchronous and asynchronous classes for online students and schedule of receiving and submission of modules for modular students. Moreover, the learning modalities' rules and regulations are also discussed.

Every week, students received printed SLMs (Self Learning Modules) from the school throughout the First Quarter of the school year. However, when the Second Quarter began, the school administration decided to have the SLMs in a soft copy form to maximize the use of the OTG (On-The-Go) Flash Drive given by the City Government and also to prevent overcrowding in the school during distribution and submission of outputs in school. When the third grading arrived, the

school administration decided to create a booklet that contained additional sources for students as well as the SLMs prepared by the division. Throughout the implementation of distance learning, the SLMs underwent several modifications to accommodate the needs of the students.

Support to the Stakeholders. The teachers received material support such as laptops from the Local Government in order to support the needs in conducting Emergency Remote Learning. Department of Education (2020) taps the Department of Budget and Management for the funds that are needed to address the needs of the education sector. There are also times that the teachers who were not able to go to school will ask for help for other teachers to send them a copy of their students' answers through messenger. Students' support system came from their MKOs (More Knowledgeable Others), which is their parents, older siblings, other relatives and even neighbors. Whereas all the inquiries regarding their modules, activities and lessons will be asked to them. They also received help from the Local Government that comes in sim cards with loads for mobile data and even school supplies. The school also distributed On-The-Go USB where they can browse their learning modules (DepEd of Philippines, 2020a).

Parents received support also from the institution, from their own relatives or neighbors and even to the teacher in the means of inquiries regarding the modules and many more. Their relatives allow them to use their extra gadgets and help the students in their modules, on the other hand the parents were using the group chat together with the teacher to receive updates on the release of new modules and to answer different questions.

The support given to the three stakeholders helps in addressing the struggles of the modality, but these solutions were for short term as the education sector still has a long way to go in resolving challenges.

The Learner's Experience in Distance Learning. The researchers have interviewed learner participants, who choose ODL (Online Distance Learning) but decided to shift to MDL (Modular Distance Learning), because of insufficient technological resources and those who can't afford the needs of ODL. According to C.J. Bonk & C.R. Graham (2006) and C.F. Kheng (2014), the emergence of e-learning leading to distance learning may have helped in a convenient distribution of communication and interaction (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Kheng, 2014), but it still shows some limitations as well.

The grade 7 student-participants shift from ODL to MDL, because of the following:

First, Lack of Technological Devices. It is stated that the Local Government distributed tablets to the learners in the city, however, the

majority of the learner participants were not among the beneficiaries. Some of the participants were compelled to share gadgets with their siblings while other student-participants had to borrow gadgets from their relatives just to attend the class.

Second, their parents cannot afford to sustain the needs of online learning modality such as buying gadgets and having stable internet connection.

Third, Intermittent Connectivity. As student-participants expressed their concern on the poor signal reception in their area which results in student-participants unable to understand the discussion during the synchronous session in the ODL. Consequently, some learners expressed their difficulty in keeping up with their classmates and the lesson during the classes (Alvarez, Jr., 2020; Mae-Toquero, 2020). Moreover, this also led them to miss several classes because they were not able to connect.

Fourth, Flexibility. Aside from the technological issues, learner participants were also troubled in keeping up with the Synchronous schedule. Some of the learner participants stated that attending the fixed schedule was difficult for them. In line with these challenges, parent participants also noticed that their child experienced difficulty in attending Synchronous class.

Medyo nahihirapan ho ako kasi minsan di ko po marining yung ano ng teacher ko. May time po na ano mahina yung signal, kaya nagdecide po ako na mag modular na lang din po.

Translation:

I was really having a hard time and sometimes and I cannot hear the teacher well. There were times that I'm having trouble with the internet connection, which is why I decided to choose modular.

The online learning modality is not inclusive enough for students with insufficient technologies and low internet connection as they failed to keep up with the discussion of the teachers. However, as they shift to MDL (Modular Distance Learning), a different set of challenges were experienced by the student-participants.

Modular distance learning modality is a self-directed learning approach. E. Sumuer (2018) noted that a distance learning environment enables the learners to accommodate their own, learn in their own time and space, and control their learning (Sumuer, 2018).

Every week, students with the help of their parents received one SLM (Self-Learning Module) of Grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* Asian Studies and they were given a span of one week to accomplish the module. As the SLM (Self Learning Module) was used as the primary mode of learning

and instruction, the content and competencies that the students needed to achieve were integrated in the module through several learning activities.

Yung pag tulong tulong po sa mga gawaing bahay kasi po minsan po ang daming gagawin sa bahay, maglalaba, kaya po yung module ko hindi ko po nasasagutan. Habang nag module po ako ay naglilinis ako tas medyo natulong po ako sa lola ko sa palengke kaya po medyo magulo. Masakit po yung katawan ko pagtapos ko tapusin yung mga module. Dalawang araw ko po natapos yung module.

Translation:

When helping with the household chores, sometimes I have so many things to do, such as washing the clothes that's why I wasn't able to answer the module. While answering the module, I was also cleaning the house; sometimes I help my grandmother in the wet market, and sometimes it's messy. My body hurts so much after answering the module. I responded to my module for two days straight.

However, some are having difficulties in answering activity in the SLMs (Self Learning Modules) which results in students clinging to online searching or to "google." The learner participants tend to seek help from their parents or MKOs (More Knowledgeable Others). [S. McLeod \(2020a and 2020b\)](#) defined the More Knowledgeable Others, which was crafted by Lev Vygotsky, as an individual who has more knowledge over another which a student or a peer could rely on ([McLeod, 2020a and 2020b](#)).

MKO does not only refer to teachers or parents, but it also refers to the peers of the students who could help them in inquiries regarding their studies. But sometimes, even those considered MKOs or their own families were having a hard time understanding the lesson, making it harder for the learner participants to finish their own SLM.

In addition to these barriers towards learning is the environment. The learner participants were having a hard time focusing on their SLM due to a non-conducive environment. The noise, household responsibilities, health problems, lack of resources, the volume of modules to answer, and the absence of MKOs or the people helping and guiding the learner participants are the barriers towards the learning of the participants.

According to [M.T.B. Nardo \(2017\)](#)'s research, whereas modular instruction enhances learner autonomy, modules have become a teaching strategy and possess a quality content instruction that will make a learner independent, progressive, and self-pacing at their own rate as they can establish and control their learning. But these barriers don't hold back the learner participants from learning. They may be experiencing such barriers, but they develop strategies in order to help themselves in this kind of learning modality. [M.T.B. Nardo \(2017\)](#) states in her research that by doing so, they can take part in managing their learning

and progress on their own. The learner participants were able to set a schedule for answering the SLM and managing their time very well. If the learner participants cannot understand the SLM, they tend to seek help from their parents, surf online, and re-read books and learning materials they have (Nardo, 2017).

The learner participants were able to set a schedule for answering the SLM and managing their time very well. If the learner participants cannot understand the SLM, they tend to seek help from their parents, surf online, and re-read books and learning materials they have. And before finally submitting their outputs, the learner participants re-evaluate and recheck their answers for finalizing. In addition to this, when they have queries and clarifications about the instructions, they can ask their teachers via messenger or SMS. They just answer the SLM based on what they read and understand. While MDL has its own ups and downs, advantages and disadvantages, the students would still prefer this modality over Online Distance Learning.

Despite the challenges experienced in MDL, the student-participants were aware of the opportunities of the ODL in comparison with other learning modalities. Student-participants recognized the advantages of the real time and frequent guidance from the teacher, which is limited in the MDL. They saw this as an opportunity to be guided in learning frequently and conduct inquiry instantly. However, the opportunities were outweighed by the challenges discussed above, as it generated consequences such as frequent absenteeism, late submission of class requirements, and lack of motivation to attend the synchronous session during the ODL. In return, this led the students, with the approval of their parents, to transfer to the modular distance learning modality to continue learning without facing the challenges aforementioned.

Rethinking Teaching in Distance Learning. As distance learning offers several modalities such as online distance learning and modular distance learning, the teacher has different roles and responsibilities to carry out. Along with these, seminars and training for teachers for the school year were conducted online. These training or *INSET* were administered to equip the teachers with the knowledge and skills in utilizing the distance learning modalities, preparing instructional materials, and planning class organization in lieu of the modalities to be employed (DepEd of Philippines, 2020b:5[82]).

Upon enrollment, the school provided the LESF (Learner Enrollment and Survey Form). Through the use of the LESF, the school administration and the teachers can determine the preferred learning modality of the students. In addition, the LESF also helped the teachers assess the needs of their students.

The teacher has experienced a different set of challenges which also lead in developing teaching strategies that are suitable for the different learning modality. The teacher participant is handling five sections of Grade 7 *Araling Panlipunan* Asian Studies, which is equivalent to 318 students to supervise, and out of it, 44 students are on a modular distance learning setup while the majority of his students studied online.

In online distance learning, teaching roles such as pedagogical, facilitator, instructional designer, social, managerial, and technical in which the teachers are required to possess to be able to teach in an online setting (Smits & Voogt, 2017). These online teacher's roles are integrated through the use of different means of communication; synchronous and asynchronous. Every synchronous class, the teacher has to prepare lesson plans for the week and contextualizes the lesson to engage and easily grasp by the students.

The teacher uses Google Meet, Google Classroom and randomizer in facilitating learning. In line with this, the utilization of interactive technology applications is also used to develop and assess the learning progress of the students. However, due to some technological constraints the teacher struggled on establishing rapport between the students as some students have experienced intermittent connection during the online discussion and as several synchronous sessions went, the number of students attending his class decreased.

The use of technology in online learning could either promote an effective engagement among students or lead them to an overwhelming feeling and disengagement from learning (Bedenlier *et al.*, 2020). Choosing the appropriate technological tools in distance education is important, due to that technology used as one of the pedagogical tools of teachers that help them to develop relationships with their students and parents as well as it creates interactive and collaborative lessons and provides feedback (Ames *et al.*, 2020).

Given that there is limited time allotted in synchronous sessions, the teachers provide videos and activities for further opportunity for the students to learn during the asynchronous session.

Mahirap mag establish ng connection between sa amin at sa mga bata, may mga pagkakataon na kala namin smooth ang teaching namin, choppy pala pagdating sa kanila.

Translation:

It is difficult to establish connection between us and the learners, there are times that we thought that our teaching is smooth, but it turns out it is choppy in the learner's end.

Nagsimula kami sa attendance, ako personally sa advisory ko, first week around 40's out of 56. Tapos noong natapos yung first grading, labing dalawa nalang ang tinuturuan ko. So hindi ko alam kung yung mga time na ba iyon ay bumibigat ang traffic signal or sila ay sabik narin magbakasyon.

Translation:

We started in my advisory class in the first week with around 40's out of 56 students. Then after the first grading, there are only twelve students. I don't know if they are having intermittent connections or they just want to have an early school break.

On the other hand, in modular distance learning, the teacher participant went to school to check all the submitted answer sheets but due to the pandemic, they were not allowed to stay longer in school, so the teacher participant may opt to collect the answer sheets of their modular students and check it in the comforts of their home. The volume of the module that the teacher needs to assess depends on how many students submit their modules or answer sheets per week in the drop-off box or students who send pictures of their answer sheet via messenger. The teacher's role in modular distance learning was to monitor modular student's learning progress through assessing self-learning modules and providing assistance to students who are having difficulty answering their modules.

In monitoring students' learning progress the teacher checked on his students via messenger app or he would communicate via phone call and text messaging with the parents of the students. Students were not able to submit on time, because their parents have conflict schedules between work and the schedule of distribution and submission of the modules which results in the students being incomplete. Although there is an allotted time and schedule for the students to answer the modules, teachers also compromise with the schedule of the parents.

This implied that the role of the teacher participant in MDL (Modular Distance Learning) differs from online distance learning to some extent as it was also revealed by [A.A. Lapada et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Janine S. Montero et al. \(2022\)](#), from the teacher who designs teaching strategies in delivering knowledge for the students to having an active partnership through building communication with the parents to monitor the student's progress at home. In addition, they found out that one of the challenges experienced by the teachers is the availability of the parents ([Lapada et al., 2020](#); [Montero et al., 2022](#)).

Meanwhile in assisting modular students, there are circumstances that the teachers require to be online more often because there are inquiries coming from the students that need to be clarified. Therefore, the

teachers need to accommodate the students by providing more clear instructions and examples for the student to understand the lesson. Although the time allotted in preparation and checking of assignments in traditional setup and distance education is almost the same, they differ on the time spent on providing assistance to the students due to the students can learn at their own pace and ask guidance whenever they need it, even on time beyond the working hours (Doube, 2000).

The teacher utilizes low bandwidth applications such as messenger and phone calls to accommodate modular students. The utilization of communication technology such as phone calls and utilizing messenger apps is cost effective in providing educational services such as assisting the students whenever they need it. In addition, Y. Tang & K.F. Hew (2017) found in their study that utilizing MIM (Mobile Instant Messaging), such as WhatsApp and WeChat is used as the medium in journaling, communication, transmitting information, providing feedback, guidance, and assessment to the students as it provides minimal cost, user-friendly and temporal, due to that MIM is accessible and allows user to record and send information via mobile phones (Tang & Hew, 2017).

However, challenges in MIM also emerge, such as the availability of electronic devices, internet connectivity issues, and language barrier. In relation to the study, such communications depend on the availability of the teacher, students, or parents as they serve as mediators between students and teachers who have the devices or the students are just borrowing mobile phones from their relatives.

Actually magulang ang kinoccontact namin e, pina follow up ganitong araw ang kuhaan ng otg, may mga magulang na nireremind namin sa pagkuha ng module eh ang priority ng magulang ay work eh kadalasan ang work is before 7 am nandoon na sila sa trabaho tapos ang uwi late na rin kumbaga sarado na ang school hours nireremind naman namin sila, meron naman kaming students na nagtatanong through messenger, 'sir paano ba itong activity na ito hindi namin ma pickup hindi namin maintindihan'. Kung may mga ganun, naa-address namin yung mga kailangan nila.

Translation:

Actually, we communicate with parents; we update them that this day is the distribution of the OTG, We are reminding the parents to get the module in school. However, the priority of the parents is work; usually, the work is before 7 am. They are already at work, and then come home late. By then, the school hours are closed, we remind them, we have students who ask through messenger 'sir how are we going to do in this activity? We don't understand. If there are such, we address their needs.

Throughout the process of modular distance learning, the teacher experiences challenges in which they have come up with a plan to further

improve the quality of learning they deliver to students. From providing printed SLMs (Self Learning Modules) in the first grading, they experience massive submission of papers at the end of the grading due to the fact that some student's parents cannot go to school to submit answer sheets because they also have to go with their work. Although the teacher allowed students to submit via messenger, the availability of electronic gadgets and image quality of the captured answer sheet also prolonged the submission as well as checking of SLMs.

The dissemination of an OTG (On-The-Go) flash drive that contains the SLMs for the entire second grading serves as a solution for the problem that they experienced during the first grading. However, the availability of electronic devices for students to access the digital SLMs became the dilemma along the process because some students' shared one device with their other sibling while others just borrowed phones from their relatives. However, students are still having difficulty in accomplishing their tasks in SLMs and to resolve this concern, the faculty of teachers enhanced SLMs by providing booklet that includes additional text sources derived from the book of *Araling Panlipunan* Asian Studies for students to have more resources that can be easily accessed and used as reference towards learning.

The Parenting in Remote Learning. The parents have played a vital role during this ERL (Emergency Remote Learning). They helped in building rapport between students and teachers as well as assisting the students with their needs cognitively, financially, mentally and physically. In relation to our study, there's a study in Jordan that analyzed parents' perceptions, attitudes and opinions on Distance Learning during COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease of 2019). According to [S. Abuhammad \(2020\)](#), the research found that parents' conceived barriers include lack of training, lack of support, lack of technical expertise, inadequate communication and lack of qualifications wherein it encompasses personal barriers, technical barriers, logistical barriers and financial barriers ([Abuhammad, 2020](#)).

Parents' responsibility and experiences with their child during ERL differs a lot between ODL (Online Distance Learning) and MDL (Modular Distance Learning). In this part of the study, it aims to examine and analyze the lived experiences of parents during MDL. As mentioned by [E. Aguliera & B. Nightengale-Lee \(2020\)](#) in our literature, parents should be aware of their position in emergency distance learning. Parents, along with teachers, students, and community members, play an important role in ensuring that distance learning is developed based on the needs of teachers, students, and their families, according to the researchers. The study also noted that collaboration among stakeholders would pave the way for success ([Aguliera & Nightengale-Lee, 2020](#)).

In the process of remote learning, participant parents or guardians are the ones who went to the student's school by schedule in order to claim and submit the given modules in which have two modes: (1) Online submission through messenger; or (2) School Drop-off as they head to school premises for the modules drop boxes as they follow the school's safety protocols and processes in order to acquire the module. A parent participant specified the process they have gone through in claiming or retrieving the modules and it includes a queue, filling out a form that requires students' information and inspecting their body temperature in order to meet the COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

Here's the example of the parent participant quotation that showed participant's experience in such process, in which the researchers transcribed:

[...] pag pasok po ng gate, meron po doong mga tao tapos nag aano po, sasabihin kung anong gagawin. Kukuha po ng module. [...] Tapos per grade naman po yun. Like, Grade 7, ganun po. Tapos temperature. Tapos may maliit na papel lalagyan ng temperature then yung pangalan ng bata tapos section ng bata.

Translation:

[...] as I enter the gate, there are people there and then, they will tell you what to do. I'll get a module. [...] It's per grade, like, Grade 7, and so on. Then checking the temperature. Then there is a small piece of paper with the temperature, then the child's name, then the child's section.

Parents or guardians also serve as the MKOs (More Knowledgeable Others) for the students, provided that they could have a higher level of knowledge that might give guidance and instructions on students. It is necessary that parents should guide, assist the students and relay the instructions or directions that were directed by the teachers as the student participants accomplish the assigned modules.

According to [Shelina Bhamani et al. \(2020\)](#), researchers discovered methods for how parents instruct their children in learning, such as: (1) Keeping a strict timetable that the learners must adhere to; and (2) Engaging in various imaginative activities. On the other hand, the research discovered that it was difficult to experiment ([Bhamani et al., 2020](#)).

Also, a similar study by [J.V. Leander & F.E.T. Fabella \(2021\)](#), they found that parental engagement was related to high school students' improved learning outcomes. According to the findings of the report, there are two types of involvement that lead to the academic achievement of grade 7 students: home and school involvement, which can be described as parental efforts. Parent participants are the ones who

communicate to student participants' teachers and other parents through SMS (text messaging), Messenger and other online messaging apps about the student participants' questions, inquiries and clarifications (Leander & Fabella, 2021).

A parent participant stated that she guides the student in order to accomplish the given activities in the given module. The following quotation was derived from a transcribed data from a parent participant:

Di ko po sya tinutulungan, gina-guide ko lang po. Mahirap naman po kasi kapag wala syang matutunan. Sinasabi ko lang sa kanya na gawin niya yung ano, yung mga nasa USB para po maipasa nya po para sa second quarter po nya.

Translation:

I'm not helping him, I'm just guiding him. It's hard when he doesn't learn anything. I'm just telling him to do what, the ones on the USB so he can pass it on for his second quarter.

As the educational system transitioned to Emergency Remote Learning, parents encountered different struggles, difficulties and challenges in different access in order to conform for these said changes. Parent participants indicated these struggles as they experienced it: Financial needs to support the students' needs for accessibility; Parents' work-life balance for their modified responsibilities or role for student learning; They sometimes or somehow lack or insufficient knowledge about the student's different subject matter though they are considered as a MKO (More Knowledgeable Other); and they also perceived barriers such as students' focus, motivation, connectivity, workload management and resources that consists of access, quality and availability. A parent participant experienced that there are times that the teacher is not reachable. That's why it is also perceived as a barrier for students' learning.

Despite all of the struggles and challenges, parents developed different coping strategies that mitigate these said struggles. These coping strategies encompasses setting work, study and support time for them to manage their workload; As they have insufficient knowledge in certain topics, they established a strategies such as seeking help from MKOs (More Knowledgeable Others), teachers and other students, online surfing (google) for researching topics that could help students in answering their modules and accessing resources from external sources; They also tend to seek help from their relatives for financial and gadget needs.

And one of the things that a parent participant did for clarifications is to message the teacher through online messaging (messenger).

Nagtatanong po ako, tine-text ko po yung mga teacher nila kapag may hindi po ako alam sa mga kailangan ng bata. Mga ginagawa nila ganon. China-chat ko po sila, sumasagot naman po.

Translation:

I will ask questions, I text their teachers when there's something I don't know about the child's inquiries or about their requirements. I chat with them and they answer.

In a research entitled “Teachers Initiatives and Perceived Parental Involvement Practices among Filipino Junior High School Students Frosyl”, it indicates that parents made an adaptation from face to face to modular and online learning in order to render guidance and support to their child. The study concluded that parents find strategic ways for students' continuous learning and enrichment even at home. They stated that students on SLM (Self Learning Module) and MDL (Modular Distance Learning) have made their schedule flexible and have the ability to manage their time at their own pace (Miguel, Prudente & Aguja, 2021).

On the other hand, parents claim that students have a short retention span on their learnings on modules. Parent participants also indicated the advantages and disadvantages in modular distance learning as they tend to compare MDL with ODL (Online Distance Learning) as students tend to have different approaches and performance on different modes of learning.

CONCLUSION

In the process of the distance learning, the school and teacher participants acknowledged the concerns and challenges faced by the learner and their parents/guardians amidst COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease of 2019). As the teacher participant handles two distance learning modality, which generates distinct experiences. From being a facilitator, pedagogical, facilitator, instructional designer, social, managerial, and technical in ODL (Online Distance Learning), the teacher also serves as a learning monitor of the learners in the MDL (Modular Distance Learning). As the teacher dwells on both modalities, the teacher faces numerous challenges.

Some of the challenges that the teacher emphasized is the lack of the rapport to the learners and their parents, lack of motivation in learning, insufficiency or lack of gadgets and connectivity of the learners, and the content deficiency of the AP (*Araling Panlipunan*) Asian Studies self-learning modules. As a response the teacher participant exerted an effort to devise strategies such as the guidance through different mediums (messenger and text), and distribution of additional learning materials

that will match the learners' learning interest and capability. Moreover, difficulty in the submission of academic requirements were also mended with the flexible submissions. This act of the teacher participant was aimed towards ensuring that the learners will receive sufficient, effective, and meaningful learning during distance learning.

On the other hand, students in the study faced different struggles such as the lack of gadgets, poor connectivity, and being unable to keep up with the ODL schedule. Despite the challenges they faced in ODL, some students preferred the ODL due to the real time instruction provided by the teacher. However, due to the aforementioned challenges, the learner participant decided to transfer to MDL, which allowed them to have control over their time in studying and to have some time in doing household chores.

As they shift to a more flexible modality, new issues arise such as insufficient content and difficulty of self-learning modules. Moreover, the interaction between their teachers is lessened to the use of online messaging applications. With these challenges in new modality the student participants seek help from MKOs (More Knowledgeable Others), such as their parents, relatives or neighbors. The utilization of online learning materials was provided by their teacher for them to have supplementary sources of information. Moreover, some students emphasized that time management is a vital factor for them to accomplish the academic requirements.

Furthermore, the parents' role was proven vital in the distance learning modalities. As the teacher's guidance is limited, the parents serve as the para-teachers that monitor, and facilitate the learning of the learners. This role coincides with other home responsibilities such as provision of the daily needs of the learners. Consequently, these roles generated challenges for the parents such as the lack of knowledge about the content of the lessons and difficulties in balancing work and guiding their children. However, parent participants came up with strategies that allowed them to overcome the challenges. Henceforth, the researchers found that the parents are actively involved in the learning process.

Students, Teachers, Parents, and the Institution should work hand in hand in order to overcome the challenges in the education system brought by the pandemic. Building a foundation of good rapport between the stakeholders enables them to create a more holistic and conducive space for the learners. This could be done by integrating feedback on the works of the students, parents must remain active in participating on their children's study load in the means of helping or guiding them in accomplishing their task. Despite being a modular type of learning, these students still utilize the technology as it revolutionizes

the education system as of today. There is still a long way to go when it comes to the modules that modular students have. Students' learning abilities and skills couldn't reach the expected outcomes the department envisions for the students.

Recommendation. In accordance with the findings of the study, the researchers devised sets of strategies that are aimed for the betterment of the implementation of the distance learning modalities. The education stakeholders -- students, teachers and parents should develop an open communication or rapport as the students apply their learnings *Araling Asyano* in real life situations. Parents should also carry out their roles through provisions of conducive learning environment, the learning materials and academic needs. Furthermore, despite the given circumstances, stakeholders should develop strategies for continuously quality learning such as a wide array of teachers' teaching strategies to respond to the learner's needs and interest.

In line with this, educational leaders must acknowledge the student's learning styles in making activities in the module by considering the diversity of learners through a review of the Self Learning Modules to adapt to learner's learning styles and inclusivity should be prioritized to effectively deliver learning. Correspondingly, local and national government should continuously distribute the essentials for MDL (Modular Distance Learning) and ODL (Online Distance Learning), such as the gadgets (cellphones and tablets), load allowance, and on-the-go flash drives for students, proper orientation and seminars for parents, and laptops, flash drives, and also load allowance for teachers.

Moreover, the National Government together with the Education Department must address the needs in our education system, a proper budget alignment to the education sector that will address both and new challenges in education especially in remote learning as the country continues to battle the pandemic through a good partnership with the NTC (National Telecommunications Commission) and the three main telecommunication companies in the country in attaining strong, clear, and fast signal and internet connectivity throughout the country. Lastly, for the future researchers, researchers should continue to investigate its effectiveness in the local education system.

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