

Difficulties, Factors, and Coping Mechanisms of Primary Grade Teachers in Teaching Reading Using Modular Distance Learning

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore and analyze the difficulties in teaching beginning reading using modular distance learning, its contributing factors, and the coping mechanisms to tackle the difficulties. The qualitative-descriptive design was employed in identifying and describing the variables of the study. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were utilized to gather the primary data needed in addition to observation reports. Deductive thematic analysis was also employed to categorize and sub-categorize the findings into themes. The findings revealed that teachers have difficulties in addressing reading and in assessing, monitoring, and validating pupils' performance using modules, and in the construction and distribution of modules. Factors that led to these difficulties include pupils' lack of cognitive understanding and independence in learning, along with the unsuitability of modules in reading instruction, parents' lack of guidance because of insufficient expertise, time constraints, and the absence of communication with teachers. Teachers' attitude, motivation, and lack of training in modular construction were also factors that contributed to their difficulties. The coping mechanisms employed were module modification, making or sharing videos, restricted face-to-face tutorials, and establishing interaction with other stakeholders.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a vital skill in literacy development and a crucial skill in lifelong learning. It is the most significant language skill for learners to be independent in their learning. Rycik and Irvin (2005) declare that the teaching of reading is considered an arduous endeavor for its role in developing literacy among young learners. Among many reading authors and educators, Adams (1990), Stanovich (2000), and Ehri and Roberts (2006) asserted that reading is a crucial skill that must be developed in the early years. They specifically claim that the foundational

skills of reading, which are phonemic awareness and phonics skills, should be taught as early as possible, for they affect the children's overall reading progress along the way. However, at the grip of the pandemic in its early years, formal education has been hindered. Countries like the Philippines did not have the hi-tech opportunities to equip the schools with adequate equipment, nor did most of the parents have the capacity to provide gadgets for their children to use in online learning. Therefore, the use of modular instruction as an alternative delivery mode was implemented during the two years of pandemic-induced lockdown. Modular distance learning (MDL) is an unconventional mode of learning especially in rural areas, both in elementary and high school levels was utilized.

Several studies concerning the use of MDL were conducted among schools in both urban and rural areas. Yet, there was a noticeable lack of representation among primary-grade teachers in rural areas. There was also a discrepancy in the perceived effectiveness of modular distance learning in relation to teaching reading. Teaching beginning reading has been a challenging task in normal face-to-face instruction, and it is even more non-achievable with the use of modular distance learning. Primary-grade teachers have struggles in trying to teach beginning reading using modular self-learning modules; hence, this study was conducted to explore the experiences of teachers in teaching beginning reading with the use of modular distance learning.

1.1. Research Objective

One of the main objectives of this research was to explore the challenges or difficulties faced by primary grade teachers in teaching reading using Modular Distance Learning. Another important objective was to identify the factors that led to the difficulties encountered by the participants of this study. Finally, this study aimed to determine the coping mechanisms that were utilized by the participants of this study in addressing their difficulties.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The involvement of the grapho-phonetic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic cueing systems is what reading is all about (Brantley, 2007). McIntyre et al. (2011) articulate that an elementary teacher's most challenging task and most imperative goal is to develop the reading skills of young learners. It is a fact that children who possess advanced reading skills also perform better in other content areas. Teaching beginning reading always requires explicit or direct instruction to demonstrate the skills being taught and progress monitoring to always verify learners' acquisition of skills. The foundational skills that must be taught and developed in K-3 years are phonemic awareness and phonics skills. To put it simply, phonemic awareness is the sound, and phonics deals with the letter-sound relationship. Several studies have found the importance of these skills as a key predictor of a learner's success in learning to read (Stanovich, 2000; Ehri & Roberts, 2006). Smith (2015) found in her study that early intervention with young learners had a great impact on their reading development.

The 2019 National Assessments findings were published by the Department of Education before the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic. The data indicates that a significant number of students in the early grades continue to encounter difficulties in acquiring language, literacy, and numeracy skills. The presence of inadequate reading comprehension skills seems to be a contributing factor to subpar performance in subjects such as mathematics and science. The aforementioned findings are a direct result of the learners' insufficient reading skills. Consequently, in order to promote literacy among children, the 'Every Child A Reader

Program' (ECARP) has been enhanced, leading to the establishment of the Hamon: 'Bawat Bata Bumabasa' (3Bs Initiatives). The objective of this memo is to improve the overall reading proficiency of students from primary to high school levels through the provision of effective instruction by teachers and collaboration with various partners. However, due to the ongoing global epidemic, the complete implementation of this initiative has been hindered.

The UNESCO (2020) defines distance learning as the use of educational process system of teaching-learning carry out by someone removed in space and time. As such UNESCO further provides requirement in using distance learning instruction and these are: structured planning, well-designed courses, special instructional techniques, methods of communication and other technologies. These requirements must be attained for a well-implemented use of distance learning in lieu of a traditional face to face instruction. In addition, Burns (2011) defined distance education or distance learning as a structured educational approach characterized by physical separation between teacher and students. The Philippines' Department of Education (2020) also defined modular distance learning as a learning mode where pupils use printed self-learning modules, or *SLMs*. This method is predominantly used as an alternative mode of delivery at both elementary and high school levels, specifically in rural areas, in the wake of the pandemic lockdown.

In accordance with the data provided by UNICEF, it is predicted that a considerable population of approximately 635 million students would continue to be impacted as the two-year lockdown resulting from the pandemic draws to a conclusion in 2022. The closure of schools for a period of two years has resulted to a decline in indispensable literacy and numeracy skills. It is worth highlighting that youngsters residing in underdeveloped nations have experienced this phenomenon to a greater extent compared to their counterparts in developed nations. Furthermore, corresponding to the findings of UNICEF (2022), it can be inferred that a significant proportion of children, specifically 70% of those aged 10, exhibit an inability to read or comprehend basic texts. In the context of the Philippines, Labastida (2021) highlights a pertinent issue referred to as "learning loss," as identified by UNICEF, in his essay published in the point of view column of the Philippine Star. The author specifically addresses the issue of skill development in the beginning stages of learning to read. Scholars have expressed apprehensions regarding the literacy development of students. One of the most concerning issues pertains to the development of early reading skills in primary education. According to Labastida (2021), the acquisition of specific reading abilities poses difficulties when attempting to address them through self-learning modules. He acknowledged the difficulties faced by both parents and teachers in effectively teaching youngsters the correct procedures for reading.

Several studies like that of Sadiq and Zamir's (2014) reported that a subset of students expressed a preference for utilizing the modular learning technique. The researchers reached the conclusion that modular learning is a self-directed learning approach that is characterized by the provision of rapid reinforcement and feedback during practice exercises. This aspect of modular learning serves to encourage students and generate interest in the subject matter. Moreover, it was suggested to implement a modular learning method throughout all educational levels. The findings of Damao and Nabalawag (2021) study also indicate the presence of opportunities within modular instruction. Several opportunities arise from the situation at hand, including the strengthening of parent-child relationships, increased availability for studying

and research, the establishment of a healthy work-life balance, and the ability for parents to prioritize their children's educational pursuits. Nevertheless, the survey also unveiled the problems or difficulties encountered by students throughout modular classes. The primary obstacle encountered was a lack of adequate monitoring provided by the teachers. The validity and dependability of students' replies were subject to questioning, and the learning outcomes were deemed unsatisfactory. Moreover, the children underscored the need to foster collaboration among students, parents, and teachers. The parents put out a suggestion advocating for the reinstatement of face-to-face classes.

On the other hand, Mataac's (2021) study entitled 'Impact of Modular Distance Learning and the Reading Development of the Beginning Readers,' investigated the effect of modular distance learning to the reading skills of beginning readers during the pandemic. The study found out that MDL negatively affected the reading development of beginning readers because of the fact the most parents were untrained to be reading teachers and that to address this, teachers should use a variety of reading strategies in the reading instruction. Similarly, Pascual's (2021) study entitled 'Parent-Teacher-Learner Collaboration in Modular Distance Learning,' which dealt with the role of teachers, parents and learners as they collaborate to bring the best in education in distance learning, found out that parent's struggles in collaboration can be categorized as internal and external which can be addressed by intervention. Conversely, teachers could motivate parents by reaching out to them, giving quality time to communicate and showing genuine concern in the learner's interest. Learners were advised to set goals for themselves and avoid procrastinating and distraction in doing their modular lesson. Recommendation to school heads and community partners were placed in the use of modular distance learning if it still prevails in the future.

Finally, other studies conducted during the pandemic revealed that there have been various challenges encountered by students not only on modular distance learning but also on online learning. Alangca-Azis (2022) study entitled 'University ESL Students' Challenges and Insights Towards Online Learning Amidst COVID Pandemic' highlighted the fact that a lot of difficulties were encountered by learners when attending classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, attending online classes is itself a great challenge for the students as they have not been used to it. Based on the findings of the study, the learners' challenges lie in their struggle to adapt to online courses, their problems with internet connectivity, their lack of direct contact with their professors, their difficulties with their finances, their lack of motivation to attend classes, their issues with mental health, and their time management; hence English teachers are suggested to come up with better strategies and techniques to enhance and advance the effectiveness and efficiency of online teaching and learning activities, especially in times of crisis.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design of the Study

The study employed descriptive design using qualitative approach. The design was considered suitable because the main goal of this study was to identify and describe the existing phenomenon of a particular subject in relation to the teaching of reading skills using the modular distance learning. The variables of this study were the difficulties, factors and coping mechanism of teachers in teaching reading were free of manipulation and the setting was not controlled.

3.2. Population and Sample of the Study

The target population of this study were the fifteen (15) K–3 teacher participants coming from the five schools located in the rural municipalities of Bacolod-Kalawi, Lanao Del Sur, who were purposely chosen as they garnered two (2) years of experiences in Modular Distance Learning. Specifically, the sample included five (5) grade I teachers, five (5) grade II teachers and five (5) grade III teachers. Six of them participated in the focus group discussion and the remaining were the main source of data using in-depth interviews. The study was done during the School Year 2021-2022, also known as the last year of using modular distance learning. In addition, the observational report was done during summer classes in July 2022. There were 21 pupils of varying ages and grade levels from first to third grade who participated in the summer class.

3.3. Instruments of the Study

In light of the relevant literature, the first instrument utilized in this study was the Interview Protocol and Guide Questions in which a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was constructed and validated by a panel of experts, and it was used in both the focus group discussion and the in-depth interview. The use of the in-depth interview gave the researchers an honest and authentic view of the participants. The participants were also given a choice to respond and elaborate on the situation being studied. With Focus Group Discussion (FGD) the participants shared and helped each other to further explain or expound on a certain matter regarding the situation. The informal conversation gave them confidence to willingly participate and share their outlooks.

The second instrument employed by the researchers was the observational journal or report that was made during the summer class handled by one of the researchers. This evidence was used to substantiate the feasibility of suggesting a reading program to address the Grades 1–3 learners' lack of reading development. The observation journals were also used to further verify the teachers' statements about the lack of development in terms of reading, their difficulties, and the factors related to the pupils.

3.4. Methods of Data Analysis

Deductive thematic analysis was utilized to code the data into themes. Familiarization of the data was done by reading repeatedly and generating preliminary codes. With a broad amount of data from the focus group discussion and individual interviews, general themes were assigned to similar answers related to the participants. Following the overarching themes, the subsequent step involved the classification and analysis of sub-themes. The themes that emerged were not derived from the questions in the interview protocol but rather through recurring patterns found in the responses provided by the participants. The themes were systematically classified and then sub-classified to explore the difficulties encountered by the participants in modular distance education. Additionally, the factors contributing to these difficulties were examined, along with the strategies employed by teachers to address them.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Difficulties Encountered by the Participants

This section presents the results of the study pertaining to the difficulties experienced by teachers-participants in teaching reading using modular instruction in distance learning. The difficulties, which are summarized in Table 1 below, were composed of three (3) main themes and six (6) sub-themes, namely: first, the difficulty in teaching the reading skills of

the pupils with its sub-themes, such as foundational skills undeveloped, vocabulary development and reading comprehension unaddressed; second is the difficulty in assessing, validating, and monitoring learners, with the sub-themes such as lack of assessment and progress monitoring, and doubtful validity of the pupils' performance in the modules; and third is the module preparation with the following sub-themes: difficulty in module construction, and difficulty in releasing and retrieval of self-learning modules.

Table 1. Themes and sub-themes of the difficulties encountered by the participants

Themes	Subordinate Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty in teaching the reading skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ foundational skills undeveloped, ○ vocabulary development and reading comprehension unaddressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty in assessing, validating and monitoring learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ lack of assessment and progress monitoring, and ○ doubtful validity of the pupils' performance in the modules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • module preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ difficulty in module construction, and ○ difficulty in releasing and retrieval of self-learning modules

The participants of the study articulated that their difficulties encountered in teaching pupils the acquisition of reading skills were the lack of proficiency in foundational skills, specifically phonemic awareness and phonics, which are essential for the acquisition of advanced reading abilities such as vocabulary and reading comprehension. As a result of these underdeveloped skills, it leads to further difficulties in addressing vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Without the development of these two primary skills, young learners are not able to distinguish the letter-sound connection. Thus, they are not able to decode sounds into words. This also made it difficult for learners to know and read the instructions and activities of the self-learning modules themselves. Furthermore, the acquisition of vocabulary and the development of reading comprehension are contingent upon the prior mastery of core abilities in second language learners. According to the study conducted by Ciampa and Jagielo-Manion (2021), educators encountered challenges while attempting to instruct early literacy skills, particularly phonics, within a remote learning setting without recognized frameworks for non-readers. In addition, the research conducted by Barcena and Bibon (2021) revealed that a subset of students had insufficient cognitive development, which hindered their comprehension of the diverse instructions and tasks presented in the modules.

Regarding the evaluation and supervision of learners, it was discovered that the participants had difficulties assessing students using modules due to the absence of differentiated assessment methods. The most effective method for assessing reading advancements in terms of performance validation was through oral evaluation conducted in a direct, interpersonal context. The participants expressed skepticism over the accuracy of the responses in the module and asserted that the handwriting belonged to the parents of the students, hence rendering the scores and performance of the learners in relation to the modules doubtful. The participants observed that parents mostly focused on completing the modules

themselves rather than fulfilling their role in supporting their children's duties, as seen by the handwriting observed in the modules. This posed a challenge for educators in evaluating the academic progress of students by assessing their responses to the instructional materials. Oranggaga (2022) provided evidence to support the assertion that teachers encountered challenges about the reliability of students' responses inside the module. The assertion was further substantiated by the research conducted by Castroverde and Acala (2021) and Dangle and Sumaoang (2020), both of which demonstrated the difficulties associated with validating students' output and performance in the context of modular training. The study conducted by De Villa and Manalo (2020) identified a concern over the validity and trustworthiness of students' responses, which arose due to the inability of teachers to offer immediate feedback to their students.

Concerning module preparation, two distinct themes were identified: the difficulties of constructing modules and the difficulties of releasing and retrieving modules. Furthermore, the participants had difficulties selecting appropriate activities that aligned with the proficiency level of their learners. As previously indicated, in light of the epidemic, face-to-face assessments were not conducted. It was highlighted that the difficulties encountered during the initial year of implementing modular distance learning were exacerbated by time constraints in module development. Numerous modules were required to be developed across several subjects. Based on the available data, it can be inferred that the participants had difficulties in developing their modules. These difficulties were mostly attributed to the scarcity of pupils' data for determining the appropriate level of activity complexity, as well as time constraints resulting from the need to create modules for many courses. It can also be inferred that educators were insufficiently equipped for the development of instructional modules. The participants also encountered a prevalent issue stemming from the use of MDL, namely the difficulty of distributing and submitting completed modules. It was evident that both parties failed to adhere to a methodical approach in the distribution and retrieval of modules. Additionally, insufficient support from the institution may have contributed to this issue. Conversely, it may be argued that parents exhibited a lack of attentiveness in facilitating their children's completion of the modules.

According to De Villa and Manalo (2020), teachers encountered challenges in delivering education through modules due to the inherent difficulties in accommodating the diverse needs of students. According to Gueta and Janer (2021), educators were confronted with uncertainties regarding the development of instructional modules and the selection of appropriate materials during the preparatory phase. Additionally, the participants noted that their module preparation was hindered by time constraints resulting from a scarcity of references and printing materials, among other factors. Additionally, Estrella (2022) provided further support for this finding, indicating that teachers were not well equipped to develop their own instructional modules. Furthermore, the study corroborated the challenges encountered in achieving optimal distribution and submission processes for modules following the deployment of modular distance learning. According to the findings of Agayon et al. (2022), educators encountered challenges in the dissemination and retrieval of instructional modules. Additionally, there existed a group of students who were tardy in acquiring the necessary modules, thus resulting in delayed completion of the preceding module. This discovery exhibited congruence with the findings of Castroverde and Acala (2021). It was determined

that there exists a correlation between the distribution of modules and the delayed acquisition of those modules, which subsequently impeded progress.

4.2. Factors that Contributed to the Difficulties Encountered

This section presents the factors that led to the difficulties encountered by the participants as discussed in the previous section. The main themes that were generated were categorized into learners-related factor with the sub-themes as shown in the table below: lack of independence in learning and modular instruction not a suitable mode of learning in teaching beginning reading, parent-related factor and teacher-related factors with the sub-themes; teachers' attitude towards modular distance learning, teachers' level of motivation in the use of modular instruction, and teachers' lack of trainings in modular instruction in teaching reading.

Table 2. Themes and sub-themes of the factors that contributed to the difficulties encountered by the participants

Themes	Sub-themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learner-Related Factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ lack of independence in learning; and ○ modular Instruction not a suitable mode of learning in teaching beginning reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent-Related Factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ insufficient expertise in beginning reading instruction; ○ time constraints; and ○ absence of communication between parents and teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher-related factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ teachers' attitude towards Modular Distance Learning; ○ Teachers' level of motivation in the Use of Modular Instruction; and ○ Teachers' lack of seminars and trainings/workshops in constructing modules.

Learner-Related Factors. The participants of the study revealed that they have difficulty in addressing the learners' reading development, assessing and monitoring the learners' reading progress due to the learners' lack of reading development. This factor arose due to a learning gap experienced by the learners during the two years of modular distance learning. As a result, the learners struggled to comprehend basic concepts, compounded by their limited reading development. Besides, the participants stated that students faced challenges in comprehending the instructions and activities within the modules, particularly because the learners had not yet achieved independence in their learning through the use of the modules. This underscores the importance of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social learning and scaffolding, which emphasizes the necessity for young learners to engage with more knowledgeable adults.

Furthermore, based on the perspective of the participants interviewed, it could be inferred that learners were unable to complete their modules due to a lack of comprehension. The learners also appeared to have struggled to develop their reading skills, as well as experiencing difficulty in comprehending fundamental concepts, following instructions, and completing activities. To support this finding, Luaña (2021) found out in his study that learners had a hard time comprehending written texts in English and other subjects using English as the medium of instruction regardless of grade levels. Even if some pupils could read or decode text, without comprehension they would not be able to answer. Reading comprehension played a big role in independent learning. Furthermore, Barcenas and Bibon (2021) stated that students did not have independent learning. They attributed it to the mechanics and complexity of the module. They further claimed that this was connected to the cognitive level of the students. Also, students had difficulty because of excessive number of activities, its complexity and modular errors that impeded independent learning. Trovela (2021) declared in her study that learners did not have the same understanding when it comes to the numerous activities in the English module. Similarly, Dangle and Sumaong (2020) found out that learners cannot follow the module instruction easily and had difficulty answering the modules due to lack of learning independence.

In addition, participants acknowledged that the use of modules in teaching reading was not an effective mode of learning. They assertively declared that modular distance learning was not suitable in teaching beginning reading at all as it hindered the use of explicit instruction by modelling the skills because there was no face-to-face interaction between the teacher and the learners. Agayon et al (2021) corroborated the findings of this study and stated that teachers had difficulty in transferring quality learning to the students with the use of modules. They added that validating performances, lack of independent learning, and the absence of parental guidance contributed to the inefficacy of providing quality learning. Moreover, Bautista et al 's (2022) study found out that distance education was not a viable alternative compared to face-to-face instruction because of lack of interaction, and teachers' preparedness amidst the pedagogic changes brought by the pandemic.

Parent–Related Factors. The second component derived from the analysis of the discourse data pertained to factors associated with parents. Another aspect that warrants consideration is the level of parental engagement in completing the courses. It is an established fact that, within the context of MDL, parental involvement assumed a heightened significance in the facilitation of the teaching and learning process. However, the pupils' performance was affected by credibility concerns arising from parental engagement in completing the module. The participants confirmed that the majority of the responses provided in the module were generated by parents. The presence of handwriting evidence provided unequivocal indications. Secondly, the limitation of time can serve as a determining factor in parents' inability to provide guidance to their children. Hence, one may posit that despite being blameless, parents harbored certain worries that took precedence, such as livelihood challenges that gained paramount importance in the pandemic compared to their children's education. Finally, a significant number of teachers who participated in the study expressed dissatisfaction with the limited level of contact between parents and teachers regarding the distribution and collection of instructional modules. It can be deduced from the discourse that parents exhibited hesitancy in

engaging with teachers, potentially due to concerns that teachers might inquire about their approaches, or lack thereof, in supporting their children during modular education.

According to Castroverde and Acala (2021), the challenges faced by teachers in terms of module submission, module claiming, and student performance monitoring can be attributed to the inadequate communication abilities of parents. In her study, Trovela (2021) discovered that parents exhibit deficiencies in time management and possess inadequate understanding when it comes to effectively leading their children. Similarly, in a study performed by Kintanar, et al (2021), it was found that certain parents lacked the necessary expertise to effectively support their children's learning. Likewise, Luaña (2021) demonstrated that parental malpractice in responding to their children's modules was a consequence of various difficulties they faced, including inadequate reading skills development in their children, time limitations resulting from household responsibilities and livelihood work, limited pedagogical knowledge, and excessive module-related activities.

Teacher-Related Factors. The third component that surfaced was the factor associated with the teacher. The prevailing sentiments among teachers were predominantly unfavorable, characterized by feelings of ennui and apprehension. Undoubtedly, the advent of the new normal has resulted in teachers experiencing a sense of weariness as they engage in repetitive tasks such as module creation, distribution, reception, and assessment without much variation or stimulation. While they conveyed a sense of boredom, they also acknowledged experiencing concurrent feelings of stress. The participants expressed concerns regarding the educational progress of their learners, questioning the extent to which learning was taking place. Consequently, certain participants had feelings of discouragement due to receiving modules that were left unaddressed or modules that were evidently completed by their parents. Despite its clichéd nature, motivation has always been recognized as a considerable factor in the teaching-learning process. The absence of motivation may also be attributed to the presence of monotonous and demanding duties. Undoubtedly, the implementation of the COVID-19 lockdown measures has resulted in a significant decrease in motivation among the teachers and participants.

Additionally, as conveyed by the participants, no seminars or training workshops were arranged during the pandemic to provide them with the essential skills needed to effectively handle the challenges that may arise when using specific tools or techniques. The discussions revealed a lack of supplementary seminars or training sessions offered by the administrative sector or curriculum planners to assist teachers in addressing the difficulties associated with implementing modular instruction in distance learning. During that period, teachers were in tremendous need of aid in several forms. However, teachers were tasked with devising their own strategies to address their difficulties. In addition, certain strategies implemented by teachers were shown to have inherent challenges that proved difficult to address due to the nature of the educational situation. These findings were supported by several studies that were also conducted during the pandemic. The study conducted by Bautista et al. (2022), which examined the attitudes of Filipino teachers towards distant learning, revealed that, on the whole, teachers had a negative attitude towards distance learning. Also, Firmansyah and Bandoni's (2022) study also revealed that addressing the issue of teacher motivation during the pandemic necessitates a focus on enhancing teachers' professional teaching competences. The findings of Estrella's (2022) study support the notion that teachers lacked preparedness in

addressing students' reading skills due to a lack of training in reading instruction and a limited ability to introduce new educational tools for use during the pandemic. Furthermore, Ciampa and Jagielo-Manion (2021) asserted that teachers were compelled to manage the myriad challenges associated with distant learning during the COVID-19 shutdown without the benefit of official preparation or practical experience. Finally, primary teachers encountered significant obstacles beyond their jurisdiction, such as limited time availability, inadequate budget, insufficient training opportunities, and a lack of support.

4.3.Coping Mechanisms employed by the Participants

This section presents the coping mechanism utilized by the teachers-participants in facing their difficulties. Table 3 below shows the four themes generated from the data, which are the following: modified self-learning modules for learners' level; making videos and sharing videos; conducting tutorials and limited face to face classes, and adapting, establishing communication and cooperation with various stakeholders amid the pandemic.

Table 3. Coping Mechanisms employed by the participants

• Modified Self-learning Modules for Learner's Level
• Making videos and sharing mini-videos
• Conducting tutorials and limited face to face classes
• Adapting, establishing communication and cooperation with various stakeholders amid the pandemic

One solution that participants used was to modify the downloaded modules. Some teachers have acknowledged the practice of making alterations to the downloaded module from the Department of Education as well as from the division office in order to cater to the specific requirements of their students. The utilization of video presentations was also employed. The individuals either engaged in self-recording while providing explanations of the modules or distributed pre-existing video materials as instructional resources for both parents and students. Thirdly, restricted face-to-face tutorials subsequent to multiple consultations with parents have been conducted. Despite being aware of the potential consequences of being detected and disciplined by the authorities, the participants were compelled to convene with their learners due to the disappointing results of the modules they had received. A positive mindset was also seen as necessary to adapt to the new changes in teaching-learning pedagogy. Besides, adjustment to the new normal through the establishment of communication and collaboration with various stakeholders was also seen as vital support. Also, teachers motivated themselves to adapt to the new circumstances and initiated contact with parents to foster effective communication and cooperation. The leadership provided by principals and school administrators was crucial in providing support to teachers, both in terms of financial assistance and emotional well-being.

The above-mentioned findings of the study were validated by various studies, one of which was Gueta and Janer's (2021) study which found out that their participants' students had a hard time understanding the module, so they modified or constructed their own modules to address the needs of their learners. Agayon et al (2022) also declared that teachers in their study found ways in addressing the needs of their learners. They did it by modifying the activities aligned with the most essential learning competencies (MELC). They also provided other learning materials to aid their students at home. Bukis (2019) in her study, made use of video

presentation to enhance reading competence among her pupils. It primarily taught sounds, blending phrases and sentences which was effective combined with additional enrichment, assessments other supplementary activities. Similar findings were that of Marcelo et al (2021) where they found out that improvisation of learning process was a must with the use of modular instruction modalities. Teachers were also being creative in finding different ways to make learning better and accessible by using different platform using digitized instruction like videos presentation and online sharing of videos. Furthermore, Estrella (2022) found out in her study that teachers made use of social media like messenger and Facebook to provide learners with assortments of reading materials and enrichment activities but only for those with strong internet connection. Finally, several studies also support cooperation among stakeholders, like parents, teachers, school heads and even the Local Government Units (LGUs) could increasingly alleviate teachers' struggle.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with participants, the outcomes and analysis indicate that schools located in rural areas faced significant difficulties in implementing modular instruction for distance learning, as evidenced by the difficulties they faced. The participants' failure to effectively handle their difficulties required significant attention and care. The unanticipated and significant pedagogical changes resulting from the pandemic have necessitated the implementation of modular, distant learning approaches in the instruction of reading. The difficulties in assessments, validation, and progress monitoring have been identified as contributing to the insufficient progress made by the students in their reading development. The difficulties encountered in the distribution and submission of modules suggest a lack of systematic processes in place. The results of this study indicate that educators should dedicate additional effort towards enhancing their communication skills with both learners and parents. The difficulties expressed by the participants could perhaps be mitigated through more effort in engaging in effective communication with parents.

It is imperative for educators to refrain from diminishing their significance as the primary facilitators of knowledge acquisition, notwithstanding the constraints imposed by modular remote learning. Sustaining motivation is crucial, as it has the potential to significantly impact the success or failure of any teaching-learning instruction. Furthermore, it is imperative to enhance the attention given to the difficulties faced by parents and the focus on meeting the educational requirements of the students, as these factors serve as the primary motivation for instructors' employment. Additionally, the participants expressed a preference for a traditional classroom instruction where interaction is present as the optimal form of delivery for teaching reading, as contrast to modular instruction. Another effect of the situation is that teachers may have insufficient training in the implementation of modular distance learning. Nevertheless, this circumstance was outside of their jurisdiction.

The study's findings also suggest that teachers employed diverse instructional methods to provide learners with supplementary materials during remote learning. Nevertheless, it is a must for educators to exhibit resourcefulness and actively investigate alternative materials and modes of instruction to ensure that all parents and learners can derive advantages from these resources. It can also be inferred that maintaining a positive mindset when encountering changes in pedagogy is crucial in order to prevent feelings of boredom and demotivation, which

can hinder productivity. Developing robust communication and collaboration with various stakeholders has the potential to alleviate the difficulties posed by future educational trends.

Furthermore, based on the findings and analysis of the data, it can be deduced that the difficulties faced by teachers in instructing reading through modular distance learning have had an impact on the educational progress of children. Consequently, it resulted in an educational disparity. An intensified reading program is deemed necessary in order to address the educational deficiencies resulting from the implementation of modular instruction. Addressing the fundamental skills of learners with a reading intervention serves as a crucial initial step towards the development of their reading comprehension abilities, which are essential for fostering independent learning. Therefore, it can be deduced that educators require a structured framework in order to effectively adopt enhanced reading pedagogy.

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APPENDIX 1. SAMPLE OBSERVATIONAL JOURNAL

Observer and Teacher:

Date observed: during Summer Reading Class of July 2022

NAME:

GRADE: incoming grade 4

Instructional Assessment Chart		
AREAS (to be observed)	Observation	Instructional Implication
Phonemic awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do not know most of the sound thus the inability to decode ➤ Cannot pronounce sounds like /f/, /p/, /s/, and /z/ ➤ Has difficulty blending sounds together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Needs to master phonemes ✓ Needs explicit instruction preferably by pair or one-on-one
Phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knows some of the names of the letter ➤ Without phonemic awareness development, the student has difficulty in the overall decoding of words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explicit instruction needed (can be combined with phonemic awareness instruction ex. phonics method, jolly phonics and Marungko approach) ✓ Pair or one-on-one instruction
Fluency	None observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Utilized repeated reading and choral readings to promote fluency and also enhance speaking in the target language

Difficulties, Factors, and Coping Mechanisms of Primary Grade Teachers in Teaching Reading Using Modular Distance Learning

Vocabulary	None observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Word pictures in context (words related to the lesson) ✓ Word wall
Comprehension	None observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Introduce simple sentences as used in the phonics instruction then build up to a short paragraph
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Quite disorderly in class and always distract his seatmate ✓ Absentee during the summer class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Find ways to lessen his distracting behavior ✓ Counseling

SAMPLE OBSERVATIONAL JOURNAL

Observer and Teacher:

Date observed: during Summer Reading Class of July 2022

NAME:

GRADE: incoming grade 2

Instructional Assessment Chart		
AREAS (to be observed)	Observation	Instructional Implication
Phonemic awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knows almost all of the letter sounds ➤ Can isolate, segment, blend and identify most of the phonemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Needs to review some phonemes that are not yet familiarized with
Phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Can decode words through modeling ➤ Can decode words with short vowel sounds in CV/VC patterns ➤ At the end of summer class, she can decode simple CVC patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Phonics instruction on long vowel sounds ✓ Introduce Onset-Rimes activities ✓ Utilize activities that promote reading independently ✓ Pair or group instruction
Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is at least letter fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Utilized repeated reading and choral readings to promote fluency and also enhance speaking in the target language

Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No vocabulary development at all at the beginning of the class ➤ Retains most of the meaning of words being taught and able to translate from target language to the mother tongue as the class goes on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Word pictures in context (words related to the lesson) ✓ Word wall
Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ As the instruction is going on, she is able to comprehend at literal level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Introduce simple sentences as used in the phonics instruction then build up to a short paragraph ✓ Can begin reading books with repetitive words
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Motivated but a little bit taciturn ✓ studious ✓ a little sensitive when classmates are teasing her 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ build on her confidence in participating in class

SAMPLE OBSERVATIONAL JOURNAL

Observer and Teacher:

Date observed: during Summer Reading Class of July 2022

NAME:

GRADE: incoming Grade 2

Instructional Assessment Chart		
AREAS (to be observed)	Observation	Instructional Implication
Phonemic awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ total lack of phonemic awareness development ➤ does not even know the English alphabet ➤ at the end of the summer class, she knows less than 10 letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ explicit instruction on phonemes preferably 2 to 3 phonemes a day ✓ one-on-one instruction
Phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ total lack of phonics skills ➤ difficulty in retaining the sound-letter relationship ➤ the lack of phonemic awareness contributes to her inability to decode even CV/VC word patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explicit instruction by combining phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. ✓ Utilize Marungko approach (begin with Filipino words)

Difficulties, Factors, and Coping Mechanisms of Primary Grade Teachers in Teaching Reading Using Modular Distance Learning

Fluency	None observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Guided reading using simple words ✓ Utilized repeated reading and choral readings to promote fluency and also enhance speaking in the target language
Vocabulary	None observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Word pictures in context (words related to the phonics instruction) ✓ Word wall
Comprehension	None observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Start with phrases then build up to simple sentences.
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No confidence in participating maybe as a result of her lack of development in class ✓ Taciturn and silent in class ✓ However, she has motivation to learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Build up her confidence ✓ Motivate her even more and contact parents for additional help at home in terms of reviewing what was taught

APPENDIX 2. SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. How can you describe your experiences in teaching reading using modular distance learning?
2. What are the difficulties that you encountered using modular distance learning modality in teaching reading? (Can you enumerate, describe?)
3. What difficulties do you always experience when using modular distance learning (in addressing reading)? Can you specify?
4. Did you have difficulties managing your pupils?
5. What specific reading skills did you have difficulties addressing?
6. What do you think are the factors that lead you to encounter these difficulties that you have mentioned? (Can you enumerate, describe?)

7. What did you feel you are using MDL in teaching reading? Do you feel motivated in using MDL?
8. Are the activities you utilized suitable for teaching reading? How about the assessment used?
9. Did the instructional reading strategies and assessments you routinely use (in MDL) one of the factors in the difficulties you faced?
10. Did you have time constraints in preparing your modules?
11. What did you do to address the difficulties that you have encountered? Can you describe it?
12. How do you cope with the stress of trying to address pupils' needs in their reading development with the use of modular distance learning?
(Probes: physically, psychologically) (behaviors and emotions)
13. What seminar/training/workshop have you attended this pandemic, in relation to using modular distance learning? (Specifically, in the English subject)
14. Did you get help from other stakeholders? (i.e. colleagues, parents, principals)
15. Based on the factors that lead you to experience these difficulties and the way you deal with them, can you suggest/recommend possible ideas that can address these difficulties?
- 16.

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