LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN A MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING MODALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGY

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Abstract

The study primarily aimed to understand the lived experiences of Secondary Teachers in transitioning from a traditional classroom setting to distance learning. The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design. Specifically, this seeks to discuss teachers' experiences and challenges in implementing MDL in the context of the "New Normal." Purposive sampling was used in selecting 12 teachers from Sangali National High School who participated in the study. The researcher used interviews and focus group discussions to seek in-depth information that revealed the teachers' lived experiences in implementing modular distance learning modality. Based on the findings, five themes emerged as follows: 1) Teachers' challenges in sorting, distributing, and retrieving SLMs 2) Difficulty in monitoring, giving feedback, and assessing learning 3) Online and offline platforms and applications as support 4) Collaboration, Commitment, and Competence are critical skills and values 5) Teacher's Significant Realization during the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning. With an understanding of the participants' lived experiences, the researcher reiterates the various strategies teachers use to cope with the challenges encountered in the MDL modality, such as time management, innovation, adaptation to change, providing alternative plans, and equipping oneself with necessary skills. Developing strategic plans is crucial in addressing the issues and challenges of implementing Modular Distance Learning.

Keywords*: Challenges; Modular Distance Learning; New Normal; Teachers*

Acknowledgment

The closure of schools in March 2020 left everyone dumbfounded. Nobody has ever thought that a pandemic could hit the country, thus, devastating the economy and educational system.

Time and again, resilience proved important in rising from the crisis. Educational reforms were initiated and implemented in SY 2020-2021 and continued in SY 2021-2022. In its implementation, challenges wreaked havoc in the lives of the students, parents, and teachers. Nevertheless, the Department of Education took measures to ensure the accessibility of education for all learners through the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), with the teachers embracing the change.

The researcher, therefore, would like to extend her profound gratitude to the following for their unwavering support in the completion of this study:

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Introduction

Due to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19, the Department of Education released DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020 directing the adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021. The BE-LCP is a package of interventions that respond to challenges in basic education brought about by the pandemic. It is designed with a legislative framework that responds to the "new normal" and addresses the statutory mandate to always uphold the right of all citizens to quality education. However, the K to 12 Curriculum is streamlined into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS), and several learning delivery modalities were put into place.

The implementation of Modular Distance Learning, specifically in SY 2020-2021 in Zamboanga City Division, has posed strains of inequities to academic institutions, such as insufficient resources, untrained teachers, cost of mobile use, availability, and capacity to provide learning support at home and physical availability and intellectual ability of parents to serve as learning facilitators. Consequently, teachers and school leaders were capacitated through orientations and training to implement the learning delivery system, consistent with the professional development framework and standards of the Department of Education.

In the implementation therefore of the BE-LCP, Self-Learning Modules were crafted by the region while the Division of Zamboanga City, through the assistance of the teachers, crafted the Capsulized Self-Learning Toolkit (CapSLeT) and were made available in print and offline/online digital formats. However, considering learners' and households' differing circumstances and capabilities to deal with the new learning modality, remediation and enhancement activities need more attention. Moreover, the learning outcomes in knowledge, skills, and attitude are assessed through a portfolio, including written works, performance, and summative tests.

With the implementation of Modular Distance Learning through Printed Materials in Sangali National High School, Self-Learning Modules in the form of Capsulized Self-Learning Toolkits (CapSLeTs) were distributed to the learners during the First Quarter of SY 2020-2021, while the modules from the region were distributed in the second quarter. In the third and fourth quarters, CapSLeTs were again distributed. On the other hand, in the first quarter of SY 2021-2022, CapSLeTs were printed in the district office and distributed to the learners despite the three-week work suspension of teaching personnel.

In compliance with Division Memorandum 322, s. 2021 Revised Guidelines on Skeletal Work Arrangement and Other School Operations, teachers report to school physically for two weeks and work from home for the remaining two weeks. However, during the distribution and retrieval of SLMs which is done twice a month (modules for two weeks are given to learners through their parents to safeguard the well-being of everyone), teachers need to report on the set schedule of their respective grade level to ensure smooth flow of operation considering the huge population of the school.

Subsequently, the goal is to understand secondary teachers' experiences in transitioning from a traditional classroom setting to distance learning. Teachers then in Sangali National High School, to maintain academic experiences for their pupils while yet wallowing in uncertainty and adjusting to numerous profound changes themselves, they are obliged to transition to distance learning.

It is in this context that the researcher saw it fit to come up with a documentation of the MDL phenomenon through the lived experiences of teachers who for two school years have been battling with the intricacies of modular distance learning.

Literature Review

It is a common practice to temporarily close schools for a variety of reasons in remote areas of the nation. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the first global school closing in two years, and its full effects are still being seen. Although numerous studies have examined how the closure of schools during the 1918 flu pandemic and later pandemics affected the spread of infection (Cauchemez et al., 2009; Paterson et al., 2009; Alexandra M. Stern et al., 2009; Viner et al., 2020), there is no available evidence on how well children's educational programs were maintained throughout these closures. This exposes a huge research vacuum and underscores the necessity to investigate and comprehend teachers' and students' experiences with distant learning in an emergency situation.

The studies by Fagell and Gewertz in 2020 gave some evidence about teachers' experiences during COVID-19 and distance learning. The absence of physical activity, tiredness, stress, loss of student cues that guided instructional decisions, concern for the wellbeing of the kids, and uncertainty associated with not seeing them every day were all reported by teachers. Additionally, throughout the pandemic, teachers experienced personal loss, change, and stress; consequently, personal consequences included stresses relating to one's own and one's family's health, way of life, and financial situation (Vu et al., 2020).

With the difficulties of providing ongoing educational activities to their students learning remotely, teachers were put in a difficult professional dilemma since they were unable to rely on their knowledge in the way they are familiar with and accustomed to. Aside from dealing with the unexpected changes and personal effects that the circumstance required, such as the possibility of other family members losing their jobs, having their own school-age children at home, and worries about providing for their own and their family's needs in terms of food and safety, educators also had to deal with a variety of simultaneous changes, new choices, and unusual circumstances. Even seasoned teachers with a variety of methods and strategic ways in their "teacher toolboxes" felt extremely lost and confused by the unfamiliar surroundings. All of them encountered a variety of fresh and challenging obstacles as they made the switch to distant learning. In the literature, teachers also discussed difficulties in getting educational materials out there, particularly to those without internet and mobile access, choosing the content and pacing in educating the students and the tools necessary in giving instructions, evaluating student performance and competence, assuring student and family support (Daniel 2020; Eachempati and Ramnarayan 2020).

The teachers noted difficulties in the curriculum's content and delivery that must be addressed to make the shift to distant learning successful. According to teachers, it will be challenging to condense the amount of knowledge so that it is digestible and understandable for pupils without instantaneous and ongoing instructor support. (Gewin 2020). DeWitt (2020), in his Education Week blog, communicated that the lack of student involvement and instructors' uncertainty about how to use technology effectively in the new educational paradigm were their top two concerns. The inexperience of teachers in providing remote support to students in terms of academics and emotional issues is evident (Fagell 2020). This research inquiry attempted to explore teachers' experiences concerning some of these issues.

The potential benefits of digital learning, although technology posed a challenge for many teachers, as it allowed for more opportunities for independent, self-directed learning (Lieberman 2020). The completion of schoolwork and projects took precedence over tests of aptitude during the pandemic. In a similar vein, this research study aimed

to pinpoint the advantages and difficulties of remote learning as seen by the teacher participants.

Teachers experienced an expanded workload, the difficulty of distance teaching, difficulties in imparting the course content, and challenges in engaging students and evaluating learning (Kaden 2020). According to a poll, most educators' workdays during distance learning are spent answering questions from students and parents. Making educational resources for their students took up most of their time. The same study found a link between family income and reduced student work quality as the distance learning period went on, as well as a clear disconnect between achievement and school involvement (Cullinane and Montacute, 2020).

The investigation of Dangle and Sumaoang in 2020 posited that teachers who use modular distance learning face a number of difficulties, including a lack of resources for module delivery and reproduction, difficulty printing large quantities of modules because printers aren't working properly, and, worst of all, a lack of electricity. The teachers believe that students' responses to their modules are invalid and that learning the lectures is probably impossible to be attained. Worst, when modules were retrieved, the teachers faced the dilemma of either unfinished or unanswered activity sheets. Furthermore, some teachers must check and record a lot of papers while also having a poor mobile signal.

When this study was conducted, little literature or research was available that examined instructors' experiences using online teaching and learning models during the COVID-19 emergency. This demonstrated the importance of researching this phenomenon, talking to educators who have encountered it, and disseminating the results to comprehend how teachers adjust to distance learning, particularly in relation to the changes in content, delivery, and assessment, while also learning how to manage the challenges and advantages and any other lessons they learned from their lived experience.

The literature review reveals a research hole regarding teachers' experiences during interruptions in the classroom, as no phenomenological study has been conducted yet on the lived experiences of teachers in Zamboanga City in Modular Distance Learning. The lack of empirical studies that specifically address teachers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and the compelled switch to online learning also emphasizes the need for this exploration.

Although the evidence supports the validity of previous educational disruptions, it does not provide much information about teachers' experiences during those disturbances. There is not much empirical research on teachers' experiences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the existence of information about those experiences. Educators serve as key personnel to continue instructing the young during this health crisis, and despite inadequate tactical training, teachers need to meet the challenge. This research study focuses on considering and understanding teachers' experiences. Phenomenology provides the appropriate methodological approach in order to gather and analyze data to comprehend those experiences.

The phenomenological study of Hain in 2020 on "Teachers' Experiences with Distance Learning Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic" indicates that despite the different experiences of the instructor participants, there were parallels in the content modification owing to a mandatory time restriction, a constrained delivery mode, and concerns for students' mental health. Furthermore, the results indicate that several teachers shifted their effort to engaging learners and supporting them emotionally rather than on academic progress in distance learning. The findings add to the emerging body of knowledge on education during COVID-19, specifically the experiences of educators

with confusion and frustration reigning in their hearts during the pandemic. This study sheds light on the lived experiences of teachers who dealt with distance learning modality with little knowledge and training.

With the aforementioned related literature and studies on Modular Distance Learning, specifically as experienced by secondary teachers, their findings will be applicable as this research unfolds.

Action Research Objectives

Understanding teachers' lived experiences fosters valuable professional development for everyone involved (Colton and Sparks Langer 1993, 45-54). Teachers become better educators when they reflect on their experiences with the goal of improving their instruction.

This study delved into the actual scenario by listening to the voices of the study participants. It was purposely undertaken to inform educational authorities on the Modular Distance Learning experiences of secondary teachers by attempting to achieve the following objectives:

1. Document the lived experiences of teachers in the process of transitioning and carrying out Modular Distance Learning
2. Determine the benefits that teachers experience in the Modular Distance Learning Modality
3. Identify the challenges that teachers experience in the Modular Distance Learning Modality
4. Determine how teachers cope with the challenges encountered in Modular Distance Learning Modality

Scope and Limitation

This phenomenological research focused on Sangali National High School teachers for SY 2021-2022 using Printed Modular Distance Learning with online or cellphone interaction between teacher and learner along with home visits or community learning sessions. This study aims to understand teachers' experiences transitioning from a traditional classroom setting to distance learning, particularly their experiences in modifying content, delivery, and assessment to enhance the engagement of learners and uphold academic standards without overwhelming them.

The restricted generalizability of this study's specific conclusions stems from the sample population's single high school and consists of a small group of teachers from all subject areas from Grades 7 to 12. The need to use individual interviews to gather data in order to document teachers' real experiences and perceptions illustrates how qualitative research is inherently interested in thick and rich descriptions of real events.

Maxwell's idea of internal generalizability in qualitative research refers to generalizing within the society under study since the goal of the research is application rather than outward generalizability to outside groups (Niaz 2007). Therefore, phenomenological study results are not generalizable to the entire population but are meant to understand the context (Murders 2007).

Action Research Method

Research Design

The study utilized qualitative phenomenological research design as emphasized by Hycner (1985), the stance of Giorgi that it is essential for a phenomenological approach to come from being "responsive to the phenomenon." This design is appropriate since the study documented the teachers' lived experiences in implementing modular distance learning.

Research Participants

The researcher must identify participants who are able to discuss their personal experiences during the phenomenon under review (Roulston 2010). The researcher selected 12 teachers, an appropriate number for phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013 in Duran, 2020). The teachers were informed of the inclusion criteria. Moreover, purposive sampling was used in selecting 12 teachers from Sangali National High School who participated in the study wherein (2) teachers by grade level, one teacher each per subject area, were selected. Moreover, the study participants satisfied the inclusion criteria: 1.) Secondary Teachers in the Junior and Senior High School; 2.) Secondary Teachers are in their second year in the MDL environment; 3.) Class Advisers in SY 2020-2021 and SY 2021-2022.

Research Instrument

The study utilized Interviews and Focus Group Discussions to gather data or information. An equally essential data-gathering tool was the researcher-made Interview Questions (Appendix A) with loosely structured questions aligned with the research questions. The researcher scheduled the participants for audio-recorded interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher secured permission to carry out the research from the superintendent of the school's division. For ethical considerations, informed consent was secured from the identified participants of the study. The interviews and FGDs were conducted in person and were audio recorded with their permission. Moreover, the researcher used pseudonyms and codes to ensure confidentiality. As soon as audio records from the interview and focus group discussion of the participants became available, the researcher carefully transcribed in bond paper sheets that were fastened in the participants' folders and the observation notes gathered from informal observations.

Data Analysis

The gathered data were analyzed using a reiterative method of theme development (Vaismorado et al. 2016) commenced with initialization, construction, rectification, and finalization.

To triangulate data, the researcher conducted informal observations during the sorting, distributing, and retrieving SLMs, monitoring, feedbacking, modifying content, delivery, and assessment to observe participants' lived experiences in the MDL

environment. The researcher constantly performed reduction during the reflective processes by acknowledging emerging patterns that match her own expectations and by focusing on the lived experience accounts that are unforeseen, novel, or contradictory to others.

Results and Discussion

Theme 1. Teachers' challenges in sorting, distributing, and retrieving of SLMs

On its second year of implementation, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to provide Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) with alternative learning delivery modalities in place for various types of learners. Integrating SLMs with alternative learning delivery modalities (modular, television-based, radio-based instruction, blended, and online) ensures all learners have access to quality basic education for SY 2021-2022. "The SLMs and the other alternative learning delivery modalities are in place to address the needs, circumstances, and resources of each and every learner and will cover all the bases in ensuring that basic education will be accessible amid the present crisis posed by COVID-19," DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones said.

The SLMs are delivered in printed format and transported from the Division Office to different quadrants. Then, teachers with the help of stakeholders like the Parent-Teacher Association and Barangay Council will transport SLMs from the quadrant to the school.

However, due to limited copies of SLMs, schools need to print in the district the lacking copies to ensure 1:1 learner-SLM ratio and if supplies in the district become insufficient, the school is tasked to reproduce the SLMs. After the SLMs are reproduced, teachers sort and distribute on the scheduled date the SLMs. These activities pose challenges to teachers, as shared by the participants in the interview:

> *"It is tiring because we do the sorting, then we give to the learners. Then when we retrieve, we have to sort again. There are other things that need to be done for the day but you cannot do because parents come not on the scheduled date.* (Crissy)
> *"It is stressful and tiring because while sorting, we have other things to do".* (Gail)
> *"Of course it is tiring because of the sorting and sometimes it is boring already because you are doing the same thing repeatedly. For week 1, the same thing, sorting, so it's a bit boring, we want something more challenging. MDL gives us the burden to produce SLMs, from printing to sorting, distributing, and retrieving. We need to double our efforts and work overtime."* (Joy)

Moreover, ten participants find the distribution and retrieval of SLMs challenging because some parents do not follow the scheduled date, and when contacted, they cannot be reached. Sorting of Answer sheets poses a problem, too, as learners do not indicate their names and subjects.

Theme 2. Difficult to monitor, give feedback, and assess learning.

Another concern teacher participants face in implementing teaching and learning in the new normal is the difficulty to monitor, feedback, and assess learning. This is evident from their responses.

> *"It is hard to attain quality instruction; we lack direct access to verbal and non-verbal feedback from our students. As a teacher whose subject focuses on mastering a certain skill, the absence of physical learning is really difficult, not only for me but also for my students. Monitoring their progress is also a problem to deal with, most especially for those who are beginners."* (Joy)
> *"I can just count a few students who meet my expectations. There are very few responses from them unlike in a regular face-to-face class."* (Alma).

"Average-Students only achieved some of my expectations, requirements/output or performance submitted on time, yet lack creativity." (Rosel)
"Some learners do not comply with all the needed activities provided in the SLMs." (Gail)
"Since our mode of learning is modular, I observe that students do not meet our expectations." (Carol)

The Department of Education continually issues orders and memos to direct teachers in solving the challenges encountered. For instance, the issuance of DepEd Order No. 31 s. 2020 to serve as a guide for evaluating and marking students considering the COVID-19 epidemic. However, teachers continue to have difficulties observing, providing feedback on, and measuring students' learning because of a number of gaps, incorporating those in communication, technology, and the student's socioeconomic status.

Similarly, 58 percent of school districts in the United States of America anticipate that their teachers will keep track of students' progress or share feedback among students (Gross and Opalka 2020).

Moreover, some of the narratives of the teachers are:

"It is quite difficult to check students' outputs especially performance tasks." (Barbara)
"I find it hard to manage my time because I need to print, sort and distribute modules, check activity sheets, monitor students and submit reports." (Carol)
It's hard to assess the learning of the students because we are not sure of their honesty." (Neil).

This suggests that educators care about their student's academic progress. Schools should switch from a "quantitative to qualitative such as pass or fail system" while grading students in the new normal (Cahapay 2020). The burden of meeting all curriculum standards falls on teachers and pupils in the new normal of education (Aliyyah et al. 2020).

Despite the decongestion of the curriculum using MELCs, students still receive at least eight SLMs per week in at least eight weeks per quarter, giving a total of 320 SLMs throughout the school year. Each SLM contains at least four to six demanding activities for the students to complete, considering their socioeconomic status, parents' mentoring ability, and limited internet connection. On the other hand, teachers, too, face challenges as they have to manage their time for sorting the SLMs, writing weekly home learning plans, and complying with all other reports. These dilemmas are not just experienced in the Philippines. Niemi and Kousa (2020) revealed that teachers in Finland also have issues with students' homework and exams since they are unaware of whether students have learned anything or simply copied responses from others.

Theme 3: Online and offline platforms and applications as support

According to the teacher-participants, they have discovered opportunities in the new normal including the online and offline platforms and applications as support as shown from their responses.

"The skills I've learned in using technology and monitoring students will come in handy in the future. Adapting strategies and techniques, such as using Google forms and Quizit!, is also important. As well as other types of applications for evaluating your students." (Toni)
"It gives me an opportunity to learn by doing things that I am not used to like the use of different learning apps and video conferencing tools." (Alma)
"It broadens my perspective that education can be delivered in many other ways other than doing it in the four corners of the room like the use of apps." (Ethel)
"Modular Distance Learning allows us to adapt to change, we become creative and innovative. It teaches me how to discipline myself in terms of using the resources and managing my time. It gives me the freedom to choose available platforms to use in communicating with my students and parents." (Joy)
"As an educator, I learned to adapt to changes and learn how to communicate with 21st-century learners. It is also necessary for me, as an educator, to be technologically savvy in order to create online activities and meet the needs of my students." (Toni)

"This also enhances the things that I once tried. Just like the platforms that we use in today's type of learning." (Carol)

Teachers' responses revealed that offline and online platforms and applications are now part of Philippine education's new normal. Given that face-to-face engagement is currently restricted and increased communication is needed, these technologies work as the teachers' support. According to UNESCO 2020, as quoted in Tria (2020), "Google, TV broadcasts, resources, video lectures, and online channels" are only a few examples of the various online and offline platforms made available due to the new normal education. DepEd also introduced several learning modalities, including blended learning, distance learning, homeschooling, and more, to better meet the needs and abilities of students (Tria 2020).

The data implies that teachers discovered to use online and offline platforms and applications even without formal training. Similar with the research participants, they became more innovative and creative. They also began utilizing other online platforms, such as Google Meet, Zoom, Kotobee, Facebook Messenger (Toquero 2020), and others, to teach and take part in conferences, meetings, and seminars. These online and offline platforms give teachers access to low-cost means of instruction and communication (Gregory et al. 2015).

Theme 4: Collaboration, Commitment, and Competence are critical skills and values.

The second strength developed by the educators in the implementation of MDL is their capacity to collaborate, being committed and competent, which are crucial skills in the teaching profession. These are distinct from their responses.

"I usually ask for help from my colleagues if there are days when I feel I do not know what to do." (Ethel)

"Coping up with the challenges that MDL has brought in my life as an educator is easy because I have the right kind of support system that I received from my colleagues." (Neil)

"My motivations are my colleagues. They always got my back when I am about to surrender due to many things to accomplish." (Marcus)

"My colleagues and superior help me to cope with the challenges that I encounter." (Barbara)

"Whenever I needed help, my co-teachers are there willing to lend a hand. In order for us to finish our task we collaborate and help one another." (Carol)

"Distance learning taught me how to become resourceful. It gives me the idea of not limiting myself to one strategy but to find new and to innovate by collaborating with my colleagues. It teaches me to value time and make use to it on a reasonable way. Not only I was able to discipline myself but also to influence my students to discipline their selves when it comes to time management and independent learning." (Joy)

"Modular Distance Learning taught me how to value time and opens my mind as a teacher to work with others to deliver the learnings effectively." (Crissy)

"It really help me feel positively because we really try our best that all students will be able to get their SLMs and deliver Distance Learning and continue their education even in Pandemic times." (Gail)

"Having flexible time and learning new things with my co-teachers." (Rosel)

"MDL has a positive impact on my social interactions with my coworkers. It has allowed me to get to know my colleagues better and made me realize that without sacrifice and love for students, MDL will be nothing more than a mode of delivery." (Toni)

"It gave me the opportunity to understand my purpose as a teacher and to discover what I can still do, and what I can still offer to the utmost of my service." (Ariel)

"Distance Learning made me more creative, innovative and passionate as educator." (Crissy)

"In one way or the other it has strengthened my understanding and patience in fulfilling my tasks." (Ethel)

"As we continue to face the challenges brought by this COVID 19 pandemic, we are also called to make a difference and bringing out the best in ourselves and others through continuous learning. The more, this motivates me to do better and excel in the field of my chosen endeavor." (Marcus)

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"It makes an impact on me as an educator because it makes me feel more concern regarding the progress of learning of my students." (Gail)
"It helped to understand that I play an important role in the lives of our learners. Therefore, I have to do my best to always provide them with good instruction despite the current situation." (Barbara)

The responses above imply that throughout this pandemic, 21st-century talents were acquired. Teachers' competencies are defined by Grangeat and Gray (2007) as knowledge and skills they have learned that allow them to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently, with collaboration being one of the most crucial abilities. Technology makes collaboration with other teachers, school administrators, students, and stakeholders simpler. Teachers' values matter a lot as they carry out their duties and responsibilities. To elaborate further, working with others enhances teachers' job satisfaction. Educators working together also serve as encouraging role models for the students and community (Morel 2014). Thus, one of the key indicators for measuring a school's effectiveness is how well its teachers collaborate (Tzivinikou 2015).

Theme 5: Teacher's Significant Realization during the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning

In the two-year experience with MDL, the teachers shared their significant realizations, as shown in their responses.

"I have to keep going. Yes, it is difficult and most learners don't appreciate my effort but how about those who are doing their best? I feel the need to also do my best for my learners." (Alma)
"With the full support of the colleagues, family and institution, I am able to cope-up with challenges in Modular Distance Learning." (Crissy)
"Throughout the MDL, I encountered a number of difficulties. Adapting to changes and accepting the reality of a pandemic (Covid-19) will be extremely beneficial." (Toni)
"I know I am not good enough so whenever I face challenges, I know that I am not alone and my colleagues are there for me to help me cope with these challenges." (Ariel)
"In order for me to cope up with the challenges encountered facing in Modular Distance Learning, I make sure to have positive outlook in life no matter how tough our job is. I need to adapt change and embrace it, to look for the good in it and use it to my advantage I should develop a strong personality and determination. I am always reminded of my profession which is teaching and be committed to it. I am thinking of my students, they need me and I should be the one helping them. I need to accept all the changes and transitions of education for me to be able to love and enjoy what I am doing instead of thinking negatively." (Joy)
"The support that teachers received from DepEd is something that every educator has to be thankful for because of the never- ending support that we received from them, the creation of the learning resources, always providing the things we need like school supplies, DepEd sim cards and loads for us to fulfill our tasks easily." (Ethel)
"I truly appreciate the efforts and support that we get from the DepEd. They provide us with all the things we need. They give us the right amount of compensation and even the benefits are also beneficial to us, teachers." (Ariel)
"I have personally witnessed the DepEd's support for teachers in MDL. One of these are the trainings and workshops provided to teachers in order for them to adapt to the new normal. Another method is to provide financial assistance, such as weekly loads (load cards) and monthly supplies to teachers (alcohol, bond papers, tissues etc.). For these, I am grateful." (Toni)
"I think strengthening collaboration with parents/guardians is a great help to improve education in the future." (Alma)
"This made me realized and understand that delivery of education will always be possible regardless of seasons, situations and conditions." (Ethel)
"We should always be ready and adaptive to changes that may occur along the way. As we face this tragedy in our life, let it be a reminder that it is also a blessing in disguise, where it gives as the lesson that we should ought to learn to improve our skills. Being adaptive to changes gives as the drive to immediately show the innate ability." (Marcus)
"As we continue to face the challenges of this pandemic globally, never stop learning and we must motivate ourselves to be better educator." (Gail)

"I realized that there is no virus or pandemic could kill our individual and collective dreams. We still have to keep moving despite what we are going through. This pandemic could not stop us from delivering our goals and aspirations to our learners. Surely, the learning that we have during this time of pandemic will be treasured and will be used to make our instructions and the delivery of our service even better." (Ariel)

"We should always be prepared and be ready in adapting new changes and challenges in our educational system as we face the New Normal." (Carol)

Despite the difficulties and pressing concerns brought by the pandemic to the teaching and learning process, teachers developed new and inventive strategies to support every student's ability to continue and complete their education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The full impact of school closures for two school years is yet to be known. Hence the best possible way is to understand the lived experiences of secondary school teachers in Modular Distance Learning. It is concluded that teachers' experiences primarily involved facing a dilemma regarding modification of course content which were primarily influenced by time constraint, delivery method, and their concern for students' emotional well-being. Moreover, the teachers' experiences have contributed to the development of adaptive behavior wherein they became more open-minded about learning quite novel things. Teachers have become more nurturing individuals as they face challenges, most specifically in monitoring and assessing the performance of their learners. They have developed the capacity to observe "time on tasks" and to collaborate by being committed and competent, which are important skills in the teaching profession. However, the teachers also faced tremendous challenges as they had to accomplish tons of work, especially sorting, distributing, retrieving SLMS, monitoring, providing feedback, and assessing learning. With this, the coping mechanisms of the teachers in this trying time were put to the test but a spirit of collaboration was developed. Furthermore, the support from family, friends, and the DepEd family has somehow eased their burden.

The findings of this study show the need for further research on teachers' experiences in modular distance learning, wherein the teachers' mental health is of great concern. Moreover, the findings revealed the need for extensive research on suitable training, like using technology and applications that will most benefit teachers and learners, which can be applied in a remote and conventional classroom setting. These are just a few options given the abundance of areas that might be studied further.

Founded on the emergent themes derived from the participant's responses, the researcher devised recommendations for the School Heads to develop strategic plans with the teachers and parents and consider potential issues that may arise in implementing MDL. A system must be in place regarding distributing and retrieving SLMs to ensure that parents and teachers know their roles and obligations and keep everyone safe. The conduct of orientation, debriefing, and webinars must be intensified to further give teachers access to the most recent innovations in new normal education to adapt to the changing times. Additionally, the reports and paperwork of teachers should be lessened to let them focus on teaching itself and allocate sufficient funds for SLMs to ensure the smooth flow of reproduction, sorting, and distribution. The Teachers should observe academic ease by revisiting the curriculum and reducing the activities and taking out the unnecessary topics, the responsiveness of learners through calls,

texts, and the utilization of social media platforms, and the leniency of teachers in submitting students' outputs. To help struggling students, appropriate interventions should be delivered via text, call, and other social media platforms, home visits for direct tutorials, module simplification, and immediate comments or feedback from teachers that must be written in the local language. Teachers' provision of assistance is crucial to parents by texting and calling, hosting community discussions, consulting with them, and sharing updates on social media, and encouraging them. Lastly, future researchers may conduct further research on the existing situational context of teachers in implementing new normal education.

Dissemination and Advocacy Plans

This section specifies the post-research activities that shall be undertaken by the researcher. Table 1 describes each step, the material and human resources needed, and the corresponding implementation schedule and implications.

Table 1. Action Plan

Implementation Steps	Responsibilities	Resources	Timeline	Implications
Submit a copy of the Final Research Report to the Division Research Committee	Researcher	3 sets Final Research Report	January 2022, 1st week (Resumption of classes)	SDO archiving of the completed education research
Present findings of the Research Report during SLAC session	Researcher	Laptop Computer LCD Projector	January 2022, last week (End of academic Quarter 2)	Teacher-initiated interventions in Quarters 3 & 4 from the lessons learned in the research
Present findings during District conference	Researcher	Laptop Computer LCD Projector	January 2022, last week (end of Quarter 2)	School-based interventions in Quarters 3 & 4 from the lessons learned in the research
Present findings during Division Research Congress	Researcher	e-Research Report copy	As scheduled	Division-recognized research work

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Financial Report

This section approximates the funds utilized in the actual conduct of this research work. The breakdown of cost per research task is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Cost

Research Task	Items	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost Estimates
Crafting of the Research Proposal	Laptop computer		School-owned	
Reproduction of the Research Proposal	Clear Folder	5	15.00	75.00
	Bondpaper Computer ink		School-owned	
Review of the Research Proposal by the District Research Committee	Research Proposal copies		-	
Reproduction of copies of Letter of Invitation and Consent Form and Interview Questions	Printer Computer ink Bond paper, long		School-owned	
Identification of Study Participants	Bondpaper Ballpen		School-owned	
Briefing of Study Participants	Snacks	12 pax	30.00	360.00
Distribution and Retrieval of Interview Questions	Ballpen	24 pcs	10.00	240.00
Interview of Teacher-participants	Snacks	12 pax	30	360.00
	audio-recorder		Researcher's cellphone	
Observation of Teacher-participants	Snacks	12 pax	30.00	360.00
Data Transcription	Sticky notes	10 colors	20.00	200.00
	Logbook	1 set	200.00	200.00
	Ballpen	5 pcs	10.00	50.00
Data Analysis	Bond paper Ballpen		School-owned	
Crafting of the Final Research Report	Laptop Computer ink Bondpaper Clear folder		School-owned	
Total Cost Estimates				**Php 1,845.00**

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

I am glad of your interest and willingness to be a participant in this Research entitled "THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN A MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING MODALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGY."

Rest assured that your identity shall remain anonymous for the entire duration of this research project.

I shall ask you questions about your lived experiences as teachers for Modular Distance Learning and this shall be recorded to enable me to come up with accurate interview transcripts.

Please answer honestly and do not hesitate to answer for you can speak either in English or Filipino.

MAIN QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS
1. How do you feel and describe your day-to-day Modular Distance Learning activities?	• How do you set priorities for distance Learning? • Were you able to do things as scheduled when you report physically in school and when you are working from home? • How do you communicate with parents and learners? • Do you find difficulty in the distribution and retrieval of SLMs? Why? • Do you modify the course content and delivery? How? Why? • To what extent do students meet your expectations? • To what degree your attempt at monitoring students' progress is successful?
2. How does Modular Distance Learning affect you positively?	• How does transitioning and carrying out distance learning impact/change you as educator?
3. How does Modular Distance Learning affect you negatively?	• What activities in MDL make you feel sad, angry or frustrated? Why?
4. How do you cope with challenges encountered in MDL?	• How does DepEd support teachers in MDL? • To what extent have you learned about education during this period of distance learning that you can apply to improve education in the future? • Would you still want Modular Distance Learning after the pandemic crisis is over? Why?

Thank you so much for your time and cooperation!

DepEd Region IX

Appendix B

Letter Sent to Teachers as Invitation to Participate in the Research Study

Dear Teachers,

I am conducting a research study on THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN A MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING MODALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGY. The research primarily aims to explore and understand your experiences in transitioning from a traditional Face-to-Face classroom setting to Modular Distance Learning.

This study has been approved by the Division Research Committee and you are therefore invited to participate in this research project. Rest assured your identity will remain anonymous in the whole duration of the endeavor.

This research study shall consist of two interviews and an informal observation in order to triangulate the data gathered. The first interview will approximately last for an hour while in the focus group discussion, a longer period of time shall be allocated.

I look forward to be working with you in this study and hope for your positive response.

Should you accept this invitation, please accomplish the consent form below.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

ELGA Z. JARLEGA, ED.D.
Researcher

_____

CONSENT FORM

I have understood the nature of the research study and I am willing to be a participant and hereby affix my signature.

_____
NAME AND SIGNATURE OVER PRINTED NAME

Zamboanga Peninsula