

Exploring the Challenges of Printed Modular Instruction for Learners with Special Needs

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Abstract. This study explored the challenges parents and teachers face as a foundation for developing an action plan to enhance printed modular distance learning implementation. This study used a descriptive-comparative research design to compare the challenges teachers and parents encountered during the printed modality implementation. The study sample comprised six teachers and 54 parents, selected through universal sampling. Respondents completed a questionnaire adapted from Abante et al. (2021). Data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and independent samples t-tests. The findings revealed that parents experienced significant challenges hiring tutors, while teachers faced substantial difficulties in parent-teacher communication and validating learners' progress. The statistical analysis indicated no significant difference in the challenges reported by parents and teachers. The study concludes that printed modular distance learning facilitates continuing education at home but falls short of adequately supporting learners with special needs. Consequently, a targeted action plan should be implemented to address these challenges and improve educational outcomes.

Keywords: Special education; Distance learning; Printed modules.

1.0 Introduction

Education is the bedrock of independence, equipping individuals to navigate life's challenges. It encompasses essential skills such as literacy, numeracy, and moral development. Education is not a privilege; it is a fundamental human right that should be accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status or gender. This principle extends to learners with special needs, who are equally entitled to education and support tailored to their unique requirements. This study makes a unique contribution by exploring the challenges of printed modular instruction for learners with special needs, aiming to propose an action plan for improvement.

Traditionally, learners with special needs have been educated through face-to-face interactions, facilitating direct engagement and tailored instructional methods. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a sudden shift to remote learning, posing significant challenges for students, parents, and educators. The abrupt transition to home-based education disrupted established routines and created difficulties in delivering and receiving instruction effectively. The pandemic had a profound impact on the education of special needs learners.

Globally, the education sector had to adapt swiftly to ensure continuity of learning amidst the pandemic. Various interventions, such as online classes and printed modules, were introduced to maintain educational standards. While some countries had already integrated digital learning methods, many faced substantial challenges in shifting from traditional face-to-face teaching to online platforms.

In the Philippines, the pandemic prompted the first large-scale implementation of distance learning, transforming the educational landscape. In response to health and safety protocols, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), which outlines four learning modalities: printed modular distance learning, offline modular distance learning, online distance learning, and blended learning. This plan had a significant impact on special needs learners. Surveys conducted by DepEd indicated a preference for printed modular distance learning among parents and learners.

Learners with special needs were particularly impacted by this transition due to significant changes in their daily routines, reliance on paper-based activities, and limited direct interaction with teachers. These students often struggle to adjust to home-based learning, which restricts their engagement with peers and the broader learning environment. The standardized nature of printed modules fails to accommodate the diverse strengths and needs of special needs learners, highlighting the necessity for differentiated instruction.

Teachers encountered numerous obstacles in communicating with parents, validating and assessing student progress, and providing suitable instructions for special needs learners. The lack of face-to-face interaction hindered the effectiveness of teaching strategies tailored for these students. Conversely, parents were thrust into the role of primary educators at home, facing challenges due to limited knowledge about their child's disability and a lack of specialized training.

The printed modular approach presented specific difficulties, as many activities were not aligned with the diverse needs of special needs learners. Inconsistent parental support and participation further compounded the issue, with some parents struggling to maintain their child's focus and engagement with the modules. Additionally, the demands of their schedules and limited resources made it challenging for many parents to adequately support their children's learning.

This significant study assessed the challenges faced by teachers and parents of learners with special needs in using printed modular learning during the pandemic. By identifying these challenges, the study seeks to inform the development of an action plan that could potentially revolutionize the effectiveness of remote learning for special needs students. In light of the issues presented, this study provides insights and potential solutions for improving the educational experience of learners with special needs during unprecedented times.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The research employed a descriptive-comparative design, which is appropriate for identifying differences and similarities between the challenges teachers and parents encounter. This method allows for a detailed examination of the variables to determine which group faces greater difficulties and in what aspects.

2.2 Research Participants

This study's respondents were selected parents and teachers affiliated with two Special Education (SPED) Centers: Labangon Elementary School and City Central Elementary School. Labangon Elementary School employs four SPED teachers. Two of these teachers specialize in educating learners with autism and intellectual disabilities. Another teacher instructs learners with hearing impairments in the lower primary grades, while a fourth teacher manages the upper primary grades. City Central Elementary School has three SPED teachers. These teachers educate learners with intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, and autism in the lower primary grades and during transition.

Additionally, they teach deaf students in grades 2, 4, 5, and 6. The teachers and parents were chosen as respondents for this study due to their critical roles in educating learners with special educational needs (SENs), particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The abrupt shift to printed learning modalities has significantly impacted these stakeholders, presenting numerous challenges. This study recognizes the unique experiences of these educators and parents and aims to gather their perspectives and insights into the educational adaptations and difficulties encountered during this period.

2.3 Research Instrument

This questionnaire is adapted from Abante et al. (2021). It comprises two sets, each with two parts. Part one gathers the demographic and professional profiles of the respondents. Part two addresses the challenges the respondents face in implementing printed modular instruction.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers distributed the questionnaire to the study respondents, ensuring their identities and information would be protected and used solely for research purposes. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire. Upon completion, the researchers collected and tabulated the data.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

All procedures in this study involving human respondents were conducted with the utmost regard for confidentiality, and participation was entirely voluntary. The author of the study declares that there is no conflict of interest. Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved. The study underwent a plagiarism check to ensure academic integrity, and all sources were appropriately cited. The interpretation of findings was free from bias, and the results were used solely for research purposes.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Extent of Challenges Encountered by Parents

Table 1 illustrates the varying degrees of challenges parents face, with a notable emphasis on item number 2, where an extreme challenge is identified: the financial constraint of engaging tutors. This financial strain is exacerbated by the predominantly minimal wages many parents earn, particularly those supporting multiple children. This underscores the disparate socioeconomic realities experienced amidst the pandemic, wherein families with stable employment and additional resources perceive the situation as conducive to familial cohesion. In contrast, those grappling with unemployment perceive it as an added burden. It's crucial to acknowledge the complexity of these challenges and the need for a comprehensive approach to address them.

Moreover, transitioning to this new educational paradigm has revealed a lack of preparedness among parents and learners alike. While some parents possess access to supplementary educational tools, a significant proportion lack the requisite proficiency in utilizing them effectively. However, this also presents an opportunity for growth and learning, as parents and learners can acquire these skills over time. Furthermore, a prevailing perception exists among parents that the modular approach merely facilitates compliance rather than fostering genuine mastery of the subject matter. This perception can be changed with the right support and understanding. Additionally, many parents lack subject matter knowledge and pedagogical strategies for facilitating effective learning outcomes (Kintanar et al., 2021).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the challenges parents encountered

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1 I/We lack the financial resources to provide other learning tools like cell phones, tablets, laptops, or computers.	3.00	Moderately Challenged
2 I/We lack the money to hire tutors.	3.30	Extremely Challenged
3 My/Our child lacks motivation to learn and answer the modules.	3.07	Moderately Challenged
4 I/We lack time in guiding and monitoring our child's learning.	2.85	Moderately Challenged
5 I/We lack knowledge in using technology.	2.85	Moderately Challenged
6 I/We have difficulty teaching the module topics to our child.	2.94	Moderately Challenged
7 I/We have difficulty in maintaining our child's focus.	3.07	Moderately Challenged
8 My/Our child won't listen because we are not their teacher.	2.87	Moderately Challenged
9 I/We have not fully understood our child's disability.	2.70	Moderately Challenged
10 I/We have little to no knowledge about the strategies for teaching children with special educational needs (SENs).	3.00	Moderately Challenged
Aggregate Weighted Mean	2.97	Moderately Challenged

Legend: 3.25-4.00-Extremely Challenged; 2.50- 3.24-Moderately Challenged ;1.75 - 2.49- Slightly Challenged; 1.00 - 1.74-Not Challenged

3.2 Extent of Challenges Encountered by Teachers

Table 2 delineates the challenges encountered by teachers during the implementation of printed modular distance learning, indicating a spectrum of difficulty ranging from moderate to extreme across various facets. It's important

to note that these challenges are not simple but rather complex and multifaceted. Notably, items 1-3 and 10 register moderate challenges, whereas items 4-9 present pronounced difficulties. The data underscores the pivotal role of parental engagement and support in the success of printed modular distance learning. While teachers demonstrate proficiency in module dissemination, their primary concern is parental module accessibility. The logistical barriers many parents face, such as delayed receipt of materials or technological limitations, hinder effective communication channels. This is further complicated by the absence of smartphones or internet connectivity, leading to failed contact attempts via social media. Instances of incorrect or inactive contact information parents provide exacerbate the situation, emphasizing the need for improved parental involvement.

Regarding the assessment of learner progress, teachers face formidable obstacles that significantly impact the quality of education. Instances abound where external aids, such as tutors, assume responsibility for completing modules, compromising assessment outcomes' integrity. Moreover, the exigencies of parental employment often result in parental completion of assignments on behalf of their children, contributing to inconsistencies in submission timelines and legibility issues. Additionally, administrative constraints stemming from the pandemic preclude the possibility of conducting in-person evaluations, further complicating the assessment process (Guiamalon et al., 2021).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the challenges teachers encountered

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. The government provides a lack of materials for printed modules.	2.83	Moderately Challenged
2. I have difficulty providing supplementary materials like videotaped and audio-recorded lessons.	2.83	Moderately Challenged
3. It is difficult to communicate with parents through their number and social media accounts like Facebook Messenger.	3.17	Moderately Challenged
4. Parents have poor attendance during parent-teacher conferences.	3.50	Extremely Challenged
5. Parents do not get the modules on time.	3.50	Extremely Challenged
6. Parents have many concerns and problems about the self-learning modules.	3.50	Extremely Challenged
7. It is difficult to check the learners' progress.	3.33	Extremely Challenged
8. Learners' progress through the written works and performance tasks cannot be validated.	3.33	Extremely Challenged
9. Parents have difficulty guiding the learners in answering the modules.	4.00	Extremely Challenged
10. I cannot conduct home visitation constantly.	3.00	Moderately Challenged
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.30	Extremely Challenged

3.3 Difference between Challenges Encountered by Parents and Teachers

Table 3. Test of difference between the challenges of the teachers and parents

Source of Difference	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	t- value	p-value	Decision	Result
Parents	29.67	8.08					
Teachers	33.00	3.74	-3.33	-1.771	0.104	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 3 presents the results of a t-test conducted at a significance level of 0.05 to determine whether there is a significant difference between parents' and teachers' perceptions of challenges encountered in implementing printed modular distance learning. The computed mean perception score for parents is 29.67, with a standard deviation of 8.08, while for teachers, it is 33.00, with a standard deviation of 3.74. The mean difference between the two groups is -3.33, yielding a computed t-value of -1.771. The resulting p-value is 0.104, which exceeds the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding the challenges encountered in printed modular distance learning implementation.

This convergence of perceptions underscores a shared acknowledgment by both parents and teachers of the challenges inherent in this educational modality. Thus, concerted efforts are imperative to address these challenges, emphasizing communication and collaboration between the two stakeholder groups to foster learners' progress. Given the absence of direct learner-teacher interaction in printed modular learning, parental

involvement assumes heightened importance. Parents are integral to the teaching-and-learning process, necessitating active engagement to support various aspects of the child's development. Teachers can demonstrate support by engaging in regular communication via calls, texts, and chats, conducting follow-ups, providing feedback, and offering guidance to parents on instructional strategies aligned with module content. Conversely, parents should maintain open communication with teachers regarding their child's progress and seek insights on effective teaching approaches and strategies (Pajariato et al., 2020). This collaborative framework not only enhances educational outcomes but also contributes to the holistic development of learners.

4.0 Conclusion

After an extensive examination and interpretation of the research findings, it is evident that teachers and parents encounter difficulties executing printed modular distance learning. Consequently, there exists no notable distinction in the level of challenges faced. These findings underscore the need for educational institutions and policymakers to provide adequate support and resources to address the challenges associated with printed modular distance learning. Additionally, targeted training programs may be necessary for teachers and parents to effectively navigate these challenges and facilitate the successful implementation of distance learning strategies. This study reveals the needs in order to have a quality education using the printed modular distance learning; we can't predict when an epidemic will happen and in times like this, we need to have modifications in order to have a continuous learning at home. We are already in the 21st century where advance technology arises which can be used to fill the gaps or even make education easy and accessible to everyone. Further research could further examine the challenges faced by teachers and parents with special needs and the effective ways on how to overcome or improve the educational system in using the printed modular distance learning.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The author drafted the manuscript, created the participated in formulating the survey questions, performed the data gathering procedure, and interpreted the data gathered. The author also participated in revising the manuscript.

6.0 Funding

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest about the publication of this paper.

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