

# Multidimensional Assessment of the Delivery of Grade 1 Classes under Modular Instruction

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## ABSTRACT

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This research delves into the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on educational institutions, necessitating the temporary closure of schools, which are primary learning environments for a vast number of students worldwide. In response to this challenge, the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines implemented the Modular Distance Learning Modality (MDL), with a preference for this approach in many public schools across the country. MDL relies on printed and digital modules for instructional delivery. The primary objective of this research is to comprehensively assess the implementation of MDL for Grade 1 classes in selected public elementary schools in Santiago, Agusan del Norte. Specific goals include investigating stakeholder perspectives, identifying pedagogical needs for teacher support, measuring pupil competency in reading,



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writing, and numeracy, and formulating evidence-based recommendations for targeted catching-up programs. These programs aim to better prepare Grade 1 learners to transition to face-to-face classes, contributing valuable insights to educational policies and practices. Utilizing a descriptive research design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative techniques, this study investigates the lived experiences of teachers, tutors, and parents through interviews and focus group discussions. The findings reveal that a majority of Grade 1 pupils exhibit low or very low competencies in reading and numeracy while demonstrating above-average and excellent skills in writing.

## INTRODUCTION

The adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have reached all organizations worldwide. Many companies were forced to close for some time to prevent the spread of the deadly virus. Unfortunately, schools, the most effective learning places for billions of learners across the globe, were also temporarily closed (Hamouche, 2021).

No one expected that many schools from many countries would be forced to close due to the outrage of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ferri et al., 2020). However, the physical closure of schools has resulted in a rapid shift to distance learning, which has brought more responsibilities to teachers, parents, and students (Garbe et al., 2020). Cohen and Kupferschmidt (2020) stated that more than half a billion children had been forced to become virtual school learners as they shelter in their homes, while parents, siblings, and other family members have taken on the new role of learning facilitators, pseudo-teachers, and coaches. Nearly 200 countries shut down schools, with over 90% of these learners, ranging from early years through higher education, facing some disruption to their education (Giannini et al., 2020).

While the optimistic expectation is a return to normalcy, the interim period necessitates modifications to national curricula for enhanced flexibility and an expedited improvement in technological readiness. Moreover, it is crucial to recognize education as a collaborative community effort involving the government, teachers, parents, and schools. This collective approach aims to boost the effectiveness of teaching and learning methods adversely impacted by the crisis, ensuring that students do not lag (Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis by Thomas and Brown (2021) explored the impact of the pandemic on assessment practices and student outcomes across different educational levels. Their study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of various assessment methods, considering the challenges posed by

remote learning. The study emphasized the role of formative assessments, real-time feedback, and innovative evaluation techniques in maintaining educational continuity during times of crisis.

In response to the educational challenges presented by the global health crisis, the Philippines has instituted distance education, marking a historic initiation of this educational approach within the country's academic framework (DepEd, 2020).

The Philippines is grappling with an unprecedented level of 'learning poverty' exacerbated by the pandemic. In the context of the World Bank's definition, learning poverty signifies the inability to read and comprehend a simple text or story by the age of 10. In 2019, a pre-pandemic World Bank study revealed that the country's learning poverty rate was 69.5%. Shockingly, by 2021, this figure surged to 91%, indicating that nine out of ten Filipino children under the age of 10 struggle to read a basic text.

According to the World Bank, this places the Philippines at the apex of learning poverty in the East Asia and Pacific region. This situation is disheartening, considering that reading is a fundamental cornerstone for a student's overall development. The World Bank emphasizes the paramount importance of foundational skills, particularly focusing on reading for three key reasons: (1) reading proficiency offers a readily comprehensible gauge of learning; (2) reading serves as a gateway for students to access knowledge in various subjects; and (3) reading proficiency can act as a proxy for assessing foundational learning across diverse academic disciplines.

Throughout the pandemic, Grade 1 pupils across Santiago district faced significant learning challenges, struggling to acquire foundational skills due to disruptions in traditional learning environments, including school closures and the shift to remote instruction. These changes created disparities and gaps in their overall educational development.

The Philippines, as one of the countries that responded to the educational challenge of the global health crisis, has formally implemented distance education for the first time in history (DepEd, 2020). In line with its mission to continually provide quality education to every Filipino learner amidst the crisis, the Department of Education (DepEd) seeks the appropriate method to provide learning that considers the capabilities of students, parents, and teachers. Therefore, distance education in either modular distance learning (MDL) or blended learning was adopted by DepEd as the new normal in Philippine education (Rodriguez, 2020).

Quinones (2020) defined distance education or distance learning as a learning delivery modality where learning occurs between the teacher and the

learners who are geographically remote from each other during instruction. This modality has three types: modular distance learning (MDL), online distance learning (ODL), and TV or radio-based instruction. Further, blended learning indicates a combination of online platforms and offline resources, such as printed materials, which leaves the decision to the guardians and parents.

In the national news report of Bernardo (2020), the DepEd was forced to implement the Modular Distance Learning Modality, or MDL, considering the problems of internet connectivity and socioeconomic capability issues for most Filipino families. In a similar report by Bernardo, it was also highlighted that, through the survey conducted by DepEd, most public schools in the country preferred to implement MDL, where delivery of instruction mainly relies on printed and digital modules.

Because students and teachers are physically distant from each other, DepEd encouraged and appealed to parents and guardians to act as pseudo-teachers while learners are learning from home (DepEd Order No. 018, Series of 2020). While distance learning is considered the best alternative to continuing education while preventing the risk of infections from COVID-19, its abrupt implementation in 2020 is expected to be coupled with challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Dangle and Sumaoang (2020) revealed several stakeholders' experiences (parents, teachers, and students) implementing MDL in two public schools. Dangle and Sumaoang concluded that emerging challenges were a lack of school funding for the production and delivery of modules, students' struggle with self-studying, and parents' need for knowledge to academically guide their children. With a special focus on teachers' experiences, Castroverde and Acala (2021) stated that teachers were challenged from module preparation to giving student feedback and implementing the MDL modality. The worldwide and rapid shift to remote learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic calls for examining parents' experiences. It is needed in the remote learning environment (Garbe et al., 2020).

## FRAMEWORK

Honebein (1996), as cited by Sejzi and Aris (2012), describes the constructivist philosophical paradigm as an approach that asserts that people construct their understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. It is based on the analogy or basis that people form or build much of what they learn through experience (Birman et al., 2007; Hein, 1991). This study is underpinned by constructivism theory,

which states that people construct their understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. When we encounter something new, we must reconcile it with our previous ideas and experiences, changing what we believe or discarding the new information as irrelevant. In any case, we are active creators of our knowledge. Constructivism is 'an approach to learning that holds that people actively construct or make their knowledge and that the learner's experiences determine reality' (Hufton et al., 2002).

In the context of this present study, constructivism theory is instrumental in underpinning and understanding teachers' experiences and implementing modular distance learning (MDL) as a new teaching modality in the Philippine educational system. The conceptual framework is formed based on thoughts from constructivism theory and results from previous studies. The experiences and learnings from the first year of implementation of distance learning are essential inputs towards improving the quality of education amidst the pandemic (Alea et al., 2020). For example, constructivists argue that capturing experiences can lead to a clearer picture of the problem and, in effect, contextualized solutions (Hufton et al., 2002). Similarly, Dangle & Sumaoang (2020) also recommended comprehensively documenting the stakeholders' experiences, including the challenges and opportunities, so appropriate interventions and strategies will be prepared before the second year of implementing MDL. In another study by Castroverde and Acala (2021), the need to consider the issues and challenges behind adopting distance learning can be best achieved if the experiences of those immersed in the process are mainstreamed.

Applying the constructivist framework to the study objectives involves recognizing that individuals actively construct knowledge through experiences. For the first objective, understanding teachers' experiences in implementing Modular Distance Learning (MDL), qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions allow teachers to actively engage with and shape their experiences.

The constructivist lens guides the study to explore how teachers reconcile new information with existing knowledge. For the second objective, developing contextualized solutions, the study draws on the belief that capturing experiences leads to clearer problem understanding, aligning with constructivism.

The contextualized solutions, grounded in stakeholder experiences during the first year of MDL implementation, emerge as active knowledge constructions. Finally, mainstreaming experiences to inform educational practices, the study integrates thoughts from constructivism theory and prior studies, emphasizing the importance of considering issues and challenges behind

adopting distance learning. The output, represented by the IPO scheme, reflects a dynamic and iterative knowledge construction process influenced by the constructivist paradigm, guiding future educational practices and policies.

The research process flow following the input-process-output (IPO) scheme is displayed in Figure 1.

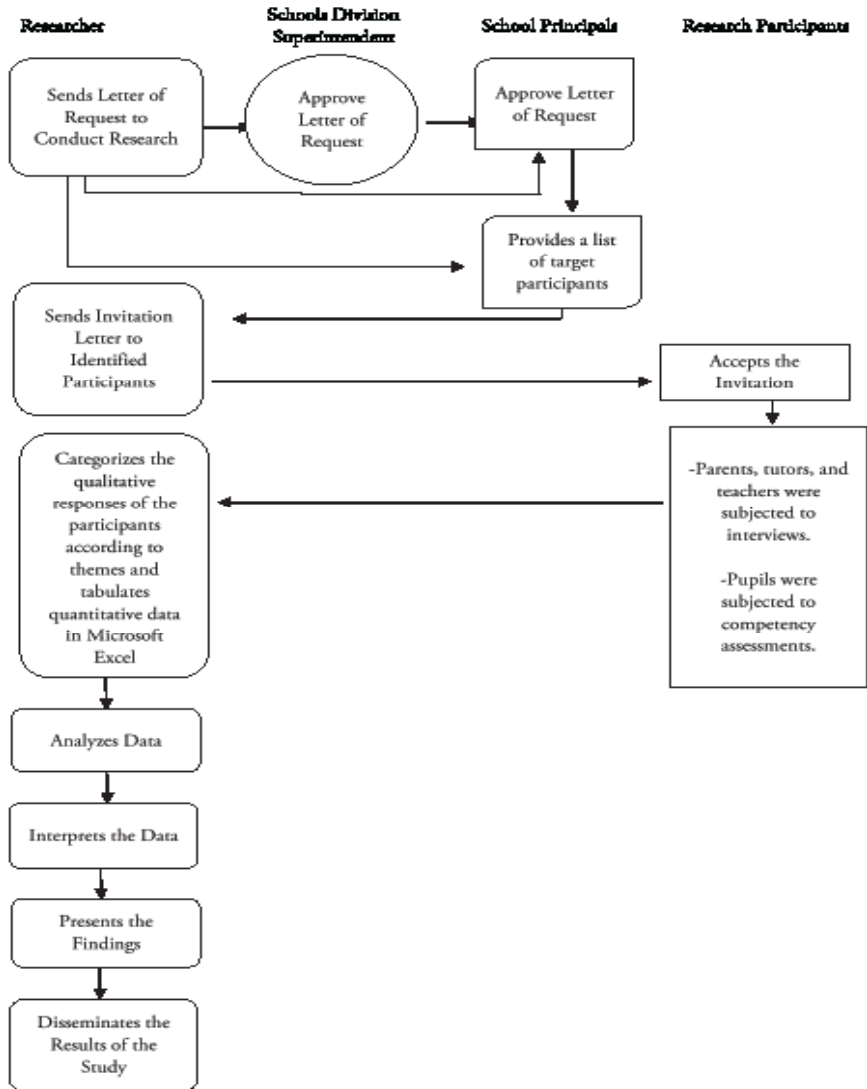


Figure 1. Research Process Flow

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main goal of this research is to assess the delivery of grade 1 classes under modular instruction in a multidimensional manner. The assessment is done by soliciting the lived experiences of parents, teachers, and tutors in handling grade 1 pupils using Modular Distance Learning (MDL) in selected public elementary schools in Santiago, Agusan del Norte. Specifically, the study aims to (1) identify the common challenges and difficulties faced by parents, tutors, and teachers when handling Grade 1 lessons, (2) demonstrate knowledge of the pedagogical preparations required for teachers to ensure the promotion of pupils to the next grade level through written assessments or presentations, (3) assess and determine the level of competency of the selected Grade 1 pupil in reading, writing, and numeracy skills through comprehensive evaluation and analysis, and (4) identify and recommend a catching-up program that can effectively prepare learners for face-to-face classes.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design involving qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative part describes the lived experiences of teachers, tutors, and parents. In particular, the qualitative part was done through focus group discussions (FGD). Further, the quantitative part answers the objective of determining the level of competency of Grade I pupils for their reading, writing, and numeracy skills. In the context of this research, the research design guided the researcher in coming up with sufficient data and evidence to capture the lived experiences of the target respondents.

### Research Site

The study was conducted in eleven elementary schools in the Santiago District of Agusan del Norte. The district comprised a diverse range of schools, including one large school, two medium-sized schools, five small schools, and three multi-grade schools. The specific schools included in the study were Santiago Central Elementary School, Jagupit Elementary School, Doña Telesfora Elementary School, Jose L. Ong Oh Jr. Elementary School, Prospero D. Salas Elementary School, Lapaz Elementary School, Kauswagan De Oro Elementary School, Villa Serrano Elementary School, Monte Grande Elementary School, Cadahon-dahonan Elementary School, and Monte de Oro Elementary School.

### Participants

The study involved 11 teachers, 11 tutors, 55 parents, and 221 Grade I pupils selected as respondents and participants. The teachers, tutors, and parents were interviewed using a guide question. One teacher and one tutor were included in all the elementary schools in the Santiago District, where five parents were taken at random for interviews/FGD. Further, the selection criteria for the respondents were as follows: teachers had to be DepEd plantilla holders from the Santiago District teaching Grade 1 pupils during the MDL implementation and participating in the research voluntarily. Parents needed to have Grade 1 children officially enrolled in the MDL and willingly participate in the research. Tutors were required to provide extended learning assistance to student respondents under the MDL and voluntarily participated in the research. Lastly, the Grade 1 pupils had to be officially enrolled in the MDL and have parental consent to participate in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments used in the study were adapted from the tools designed and crafted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). EGRA (Sinugbuanong Binisaya) was used to measure the pupils' reading skills. It has a 394-item test in which items are grouped according to the competencies, which are: orientation to print (3 items), letter name knowledge (100 items), letter-sound knowledge (100 items), initial sound identification (10 items), familiar word reading (50 items), inverted word decoding (50 items), oral passage reading (60 items), and dictation (10 items).

To measure the writing skills, a researcher's questions were used. It is composed of eight items. The competencies are writing upper- and lower-case letters (6 items) and writing simple phrases and sentences (2 items). The Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) tool measured the learners' numeracy skills. It has 251 items and is grouped according to competency, which is: oral counting (100 items), rational counting (100 items), number naming fluency (20 items), number identification (100 items), number discrimination (10 items), and missing numbers (910 items), and additional level I (1 item).

To obtain adequate and reliable data that was used to answer the research questions, several sets of open-ended questions were constructed, which served as a guide for the researcher in conducting the semi-structured interviews. Instruments or questionnaires for teachers, tutors, and parents are designed to capture the lived experiences of these stakeholders during the first year of implementation of modular distance learning, or MDL, in the Philippine educational system.

Several guide questions for each respondent category are patterned



before the statement of the problems. This is to ensure that the semi-structured interview captures the essential information that will be used as the basis for the development of the output of this research.

In terms of validity, the set of instruments was sent to three (3) external experts from higher educational institutions for validation. Further, the questionnaires were also shared with the dissertation adviser and panel members for review. This process was executed so that the expertise and experiences of the chosen validators were incorporated, thereby increasing the validity of the research instruments.

### **Research Ethics Protocol**

Ethical considerations were strictly observed to protect the study's respondents further. Respondents' rights were always protected and exercised. One of the efforts mentioned to ensure the participation of the learners, teachers, and parents is through the informed consent forms for teachers and parents and parental consent for the learners who are still of minor age. During the preliminary visit, all the possible benefits and risks associated with the study were discussed thoroughly with the respondents. Data management plans and mechanisms were presented to the respondents so they would know how confidentiality is achieved. Further, to protect and exercise the rights of the persons involved, the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the interview at any point.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Problem 1. As perceived by the parents, tutors, and teachers, how do they feel about handling their children's lessons in Grade 1?**

Table 1 shows parents' feelings toward handling their children's lessons in Grade I during the Modular Distance Learning (MDL) modality.

Table 1

*Parents' Perceived Feelings about Handling Children's Lessons in Grade 1*

Actual Response	Grouping of Responses	Categories	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is hard to give time to teach [my child] because of work.</li> <li>- Mostly, I can't give time to assist my child with the module because I need to go to work. Our income is just good enough for our basic needs. So we need to find a private tutor.</li> <li>- I've accepted that the child will not learn anything from the module. We need to make a living. After work, there are also other things we need to do.</li> <li>- This situation is hard for us who also have work.</li> <li>- I can only give a short amount of time [for my child] because I also need to focus on work.</li> <li>- I do laundry all day, so I only have a small amount of time for my child.</li> <li>- I prefer when a teacher teaches my child because I am busy planting at the farm; I cannot often come down [from the farm].</li> <li>- Even if I wanted to teach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It is hard to give time to teach [my child] because of work.</li> <li>-Mostly, I can't give time to assist my child with the module because I need to go to work. Our income is just good enough for our basic needs. So we need to find a private tutor.</li> <li>-I can only give a short amount of time [for my child] because I also need to focus on work.</li> <li>-This situation is hard for us who also have work.</li> <li>-After work, there are also other things we need to do.</li> <li>- I do laundry all day, so I only have a small amount of time for my child.</li> </ul>	Availability of Time	Economic and Domestic Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Even if I wanted to teach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Our income is just enough for living</li> </ul>	Affordability to Private	

<p><i>[my child], I must prioritize work. It isn't easy as a single mom because I need to put work first and study second.</i></p> <p><i>- I find teaching challenging because I have to prioritize work to feed my family daily while my spouse is sick.</i></p> <p><i>- I have to put work first so we will have food daily, especially now that times are rough.</i></p>	<p><i>necessities; we can't afford a tutor.</i></p>	<p>Tutor</p>	
	<p><i>-I've accepted that the child will not learn anything from the module.</i></p>	<p>Acceptance of quality learning</p>	
	<p><i>- I find teaching challenging because I have to prioritize work to feed my family daily while my spouse is sick.</i></p> <p><i>- Even if I wanted to teach [my child], I must prioritize work.</i></p>	<p>Economic Priority</p>	
<p><i>- I felt sad and happy helping them study their modules, even when I had to reprimand them. Because they had learned something even in the short amount of time, we were looking.</i></p> <p><i>- I was constantly frustrated and angry because the child would not listen. I felt pity for the child. They didn't learn anything because they</i></p>	<p><i>-When I was helping them study their modules, and even when I had to reprimand them, I felt sad and happy.</i></p> <p><i>-It is a challenge as a parent; somehow, I learned something too.</i></p> <p><i>- Sometimes, my heart hurts when I</i></p>	<p>Mixed Feelings</p>	<p>Emotional Reactions/ Responses</p>

<p><i>won't listen. It's very stressful.</i></p> <p><i>- it is tough because the child won't pay attention.</i></p> <p><i>- I felt very stressed because I didn't know how to teach it to them. It's very different when reading it compared to learning it [in a classroom].</i></p>	<p><i>have to reprimand them.</i></p> <p><i>- I feel happy, but sometimes lose patience, especially when they don't listen or get bored.</i></p>		
<p><i>- Sometimes frustrating because they won't listen.</i></p> <p><i>- It is a challenge as a parent; somehow, I learned something too. I was stressed and anxious about whether they understood what I was teaching.</i></p> <p><i>- Sometimes I lose patience and become angry or frustrated because the child would cry when they feel tired [of the lesson]</i></p> <p><i>- I worry if they understood and learned what I taught them.</i></p> <p><i>- Sometimes, my heart hurts when I have to reprimand them.</i></p> <p><i>- [the child] would act lazy. Still, I would sometimes be happy because they are</i></p>	<p><i>-I was constantly frustrated and angry because the child would not listen. I felt pity for the child. They didn't learn anything because they won't listen. It's very stressful.</i></p> <p><i>-it is tough because the child won't pay attention.</i></p> <p><i>-It's very stressful.</i></p> <p><i>- I felt very stressed because I didn't know how to teach it to them.</i></p> <p><i>-Sometimes frustrating because they won't listen.</i></p> <p><i>- Sometimes I lose patience and become angry or frustrated</i></p>	<p>Negative Feelings</p>	

<p><i>being reprimanded.</i>  <i>- They get easily distracted by gadgets and don't pay attention sometimes.</i>  <i>- Sometimes, they don't listen, so I get mad or frustrated.</i>  <i>- I feel happy, but sometimes lose patience, especially when they don't listen or get bored.</i></p>	<p><i>would cry when they feel tired [of the lesson]</i>  <i>- I worry if they understood and learned what I taught them.</i>  <i>- Sometimes, they don't listen, so I get mad or frustrated</i></p>		
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Table 1 shows the parents' experiences with children in the 1st grade during Modular Distance Learning (MDL). Two (2) relevant themes were extracted from six (6) categories. First, economic and domestic challenges pertain to the availability of time to assist children due to financial reasons, the affordability of tutors, the acceptance of low-quality learning, and the economic priority over education. Secondly, parents also felt mixed emotions.

Teaching first-grade pupils at home was very challenging for working parents. Work stress and fatigue can accumulate during the teaching sessions, considering the nature of the inattentiveness of grade 1 pupils. In effect, working parents could not spend quality time teaching their children and instead hired tutors or substitutes. In the study of Anzaldo (2021), modular learning was found to be a very challenging modality for families whose mother and father are both working. In the interview conducted by the participating parents, two said:

*“Mostly, dili jd ko ka hatag time sa ako anak sa module kay kinahanglan man manginabuhì. Igo rapd amo income para sa panginahanglanon.*

*Dili kaya mag bayad og tutor”.*

*“Mostly, I can't give time to assist my child on the module because I need to go to work. Our income is just good enough for our basic needs. We can't afford a private tutor.”*

It was further highlighted that parents who went home late at night due to the bulk of work demands could no longer give time to teach their children and leave everything to chance. This is something that DepEd should have considered in its appeal for parents to collaborate during modular learning. Another study in Malaya (2020) yielded additional support for the inconveniences experienced by employed parents towards modular learning. Accordingly, it was a massive

hurdle for parents to devote time to the studies of their children while going home exhausted from work. Families who cannot afford outside tutors, go with the flow and accept that their children learn less during modular learning. Parents have sacrificed their educational quality during distance learning in exchange for livelihood reasons.

Even those non-working parents experienced stress from spending time teaching their 1<sup>st</sup>-grade children. The table shows that the second and third extracted themes reflect parents' mixed feelings about teaching their children at home. In particular, the second extracted theme describes the stressful encounters of fathers or mothers in teaching grade 1 pupils at home. During the interview, one of the parent respondents, particularly parent 12, said:

*“Anaa mintin ang ka high-blood kay dili maminaw. Feeling Angry mintin. Nibati ko ug kalooy sa bata. Kay wala jod siya’y nakat-unan kay dili maminaw. Stessfull jd. Sagol-sagol na.”*

*“High blood pressure is part of the experience because my child is inattentive to my discussion. I always feel angry. I also feel pity for my child.*

*Because my child does not learn anything because of being inattentive. Stressful really. It’s mixed emotions, indeed.”*

Most first-grade students are expected to be inattentive because that is the nature of their growth (Castroverde & Acala, 2021). For this consideration, collaboration with parents was requested by DepEd. At the same time, the physical presence of trained teachers is impossible due to the pandemic. On the other hand, some parents feel joy in teaching their children. Although, at the start, it was a severe task to manage their learning behavior, the positive results manifested in the students' reading, writing, and counting skills tend to compensate for the hard work and immense patience of the said parents. During the interview, one of the participating mothers shared:

*“Usabay bation nako ang kalipay kay bisan pa sa akong pamaagi sa pagtudlo kaniya naa gihapon siyay nakat unan”.*  
*“Sometimes, I felt happy that despite the approach that I used in teaching, my child was able to learn things”.*

The teachers' table 2 lens posits the teachers' feelings in handling grade 1 pupils during modular distance learning.

Table 2

*Teachers’ Perceived Feelings about Handling Children’s Lessons in Grade 1*

Actual Response	Theme
<p><i>-From what I have observed, the use of module instruction in Grade 1 pupils is not so effective in the majority of my learners since, as we all know, this approach is more appropriate for more mature pupils,</i></p> <p><i>-Modular Distance Learning is ineffective for the pupils because mostly the parents will be the ones to answer.</i></p> <p><i>-It is a flexible modality that caters to learners at all levels, but it is not effective in lower grades, especially in kindergarten and grade 1.</i></p> <p><i>-but simultaneously wondered if they understood what was written in the module.</i></p> <p><i>-MDL is a form of individualized instruction that allows learners to use self-learning modules, which could be better for grade 1 alone.</i></p> <p><i>-MDL were too many activities to answer the pupils with unclear instructions and challenging to understand by a grader pupil.</i></p> <p><i>- However, it has problems, mainly asking for clarification; they could have been more responsive.</i></p>	<p>Ineffective approach for 1<sup>st</sup>-grade learners</p>
<p><i>-This modality tests parents’ patience in handling and teaching their children.</i></p> <p><i>Some parents did not focus on assisting their children because of their financial needs; they focused more on how they could have an income.</i></p> <p><i>-MDL, for me, needs the effort of parents in delivering instruction to pupils.</i></p> <p><i>-Parents need more time for their children, although they are encouraged repeatedly.</i></p>	<p>Teaching 1<sup>st</sup> graders at home is a hurdle for parents.</p>

Most teachers mentioned that modular distance learning was inappropriate for grade 1 learners because these pupils need more time to be ready for independent learning, and full parental support is not guaranteed. As shown in Table 2, the first thematic response exposes that modular was an ineffective approach but must still be implemented because of the global pandemic on health. Dangle and Sumaoang (2020) asserted that with the physical assistance of teachers or parents, modular distance learning is an effective modality for grade 1

learners whose minds still need to be hooked to games and psychomotor activities. In a statement from one of the teachers, it was said that “as what I have observed, the use of module instruction in Grade 1 pupils is not so effective in the majority of my learners, since as we all know, this approach is more appropriate for more mature pupils”. This implies that teachers have already foreseen the expected compromise in the quality of learning among the pupils who are not ready for independent learning. This is also why DepEd recognized parents’ expedient role in serving as teachers to their children in their respective houses.

Furthermore, teachers have also felt that teaching 1st-grade pupils at home is a hurdle for most parents, whether they are working or not. The response of one of the teachers said, “Some of the parents did not focus on assisting their children because of their financial needs; in fact, they focused more on how they could have an income.” This scenario is in coherence with the parents’ experiences that are divulged in Table 4 above. Both parents and teachers have common feelings towards the modular distance learning that was forcibly applied to grade 1 pupils because of the pandemic. The evident learning and competency deficits of the grade 1 pupil must be given attention by DepEd as children will be moving to other grade levels.

As portrayed in the preceding paragraph, the situation of the grade 1 learners calls for DepEd to consider reopening schools for face-to-face classes. Many students will only move to higher grade levels if they satisfy the desired learning or most relevant competencies in the preceding years.

Table 3  
*Tutors’ Perceived Feelings about Handling Children’s Lessons in Grade 1*

Actual Response	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It is not practical for them; they need more time to be ready for this mode of instruction.</li> <li>-they are not ready for this type of educational setup</li> <li>-The modality is not suited for grade 1, and it is not effective</li> <li>-Not effective, considering the level of their learning capability.</li> </ul>	Ineffective approach for 1 <sup>st</sup> -grade learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-This kind of instruction takes a lot of preparation and materials.</li> <li>-This modality needs resources and materials for the children to be more motivated to learn numeracy and literacy skills.</li> <li>-We need more activity materials that should be in different forms.</li> </ul>	The feeling of need for more instructional materials



Table 3 presents the feelings of the tutors when handling lessons for grade 1 learners. Unlike the parents and teachers, tutors spent sufficient time teaching the 1<sup>st</sup>-grade pupils. It can be observed from their responses that they, too, have negative feelings or experiences toward modular learning. The first thematic response is similar to teachers' claim that modular distance learning is ineffective for grade 1 pupils because the said learners need the teacher's constant physical assistance and guidance. During the interview, one of the tutors said, *"It is not effective for them; they are not ready for this type of mode of instruction. It is only good for the time that we are here for them. But it's not like the traditional classroom setting, where teachers spend most of the time managing behavior and imposing disciplinary measures. Unlike the conventional classroom setup, tutors only spend 1-2 hours and not every day"*.

Moreover, tutors have also shown negative experiences with the learning and activity materials, as supported by the second thematic response regarding their need for more instructional materials for children. In particular, another tutor said, *"This modality needs resources and materials to be utilized for the children to be more motivated to learn numeracy and literacy skills."* The statements shared by the tutors support the very challenging educational system for grade 1 learners, not only in the locale of study but potentially for all grade 1 pupils in the country. Teachers, parents, and school administrators play a vital role in recovering the learning and competency losses, particularly in the reading, writing, and numeracy skills of the 1<sup>st</sup>-grade learners during the pandemic.

In the study of Kintanar et al. (2021), it was observed that the two years of modular distance learning in the Philippines resulted in many challenges and lessons as the educational system was geared to the new normal of learning. The challenges include those competencies missed by the learners while being lifted to higher grade levels. On the positive side, the materials and pedagogies used in modular learning will be improved and utilized again in the resumption of face-to-face learning. However, the lessons imprinted by the pandemic on the Philippine educational system are precious inputs that the program and policymakers must prioritize.

Problem 2: What pedagogical preparations are needed for teachers to ensure the promotion of the pupils to the next grade level?

Table 4 showcases the pedagogical preparations suggested by teachers to ensure that pupils will be highly prepared to meet demands in the succeeding year levels.

Table 4

*Pedagogical Preparations to Ensure the Promotion of the Pupils in the Succeeding Grade Level*

Actual Response	Theme
<p><i>-More instructional materials for reading and writing materials.</i></p> <p><i>-All activities and modules can be prepared ahead of time.</i></p> <p><i>-Give students more innovative, creative instructional materials to cater to their needs.</i></p> <p><i>-Use the available materials and enhance/develop them to be more effective and productive.</i></p> <p><i>-Use student-friendly reading materials to motivate them to read and count.</i></p> <p><i>--Focus more on the learners' writing, reading, and numeracy skills by producing more materials.</i></p>	Preparation of more appropriate instructional materials
<p><i>-My future preparation is to orient parents and collaborate with parents on their essential role in assisting their children because of the challenges during the pandemic.</i></p> <p><i>-home visitation and improved communication with the stakeholders.</i></p> <p><i>-strengthening the connection between teachers and stakeholders, monthly meetings to address concerns and problems, and catch-up or intervention programs for struggling learners and frustrated readers. Conduct home visitation.</i></p>	Collaboration with parents

The teachers' experiences in modular learning are very important considerations for promoting quality instruction despite the difficulties encountered during modular education. Pedagogical preparations are needed considering the teaching and skill deficits the graded pupils missed, particularly in reading, writing, and numeracy. Consistent with the previous findings, teachers agreed on the need to produce more appropriate instructional materials suited to the learning needs of promoted pupils. This scenario shows similar results to the study published by Castroverde and Acala (2021), which emphasized that many improvements are needed to supplement the modules used by DepEd during the modular distance learning modality. In another study by Ambayon and Millenes (2020), it was asserted that more relevant and contextualized activities must be added to achieve high effectiveness. However, for the learning deficits observed during the pandemic, Kintanar et al. (2021) suggested remedial activities before the pupils were promoted to higher levels. In pursuit of quality education, the findings above entail the bulk of the work that schools and their stakeholders

should do. More specifically, since all schools are already encouraged to return to face-to-face modalities, DepEd should prioritize interventions that prepare pupils for the challenges at higher grade levels.

Teachers have also acknowledged the importance of collaboration with parents as an essential preparation before promoting the first-grade pupils to the next grade level. When asked how to prepare for the succeeding school year, one of the teachers said, *“Strengthening the connection between teacher-PTA and stakeholders, monthly meetings to address concerns and problems, catch-up or intervention programs for those struggling learners, frustration readers. Conduct home visitation”*. This teacher response indicates parents’ vital role in achieving the highest quality of education for all students. Hence, empowering parental involvement is one of the most expedient inputs in preparation for the coming school years, whether modular or face-to-face.

Problem 3: What is the level of competency of the selected Grade 1 pupil for their reading, writing, and numeracy skills?

Tables 5, 6, and 7 show the frequency distribution of grade 1 pupils in terms of their reading, writing, and numeracy competencies. The competency is described at five levels: very low, low, average, above average, and excellent. The said levels are determined based on the range of scores obtained by the students in the administered tests. Scores are 1-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, and 81-100% for low, low, average, above average, and excellent competency levels.

Table 5

*Level of Competency of the Selected Grade 1 Pupils In Terms of Skills in Reading*

Reading Components	Mean Percentage Score (MPS)	Competency Level	Description
Orientation to Print	80%	Above Average	The pupils demonstrated skills just above the expected level
Letter Name Knowledge	45%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level
Letter Sound Knowledge	50%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level

Initial Sound Identification	69%	Above Average	The pupils demonstrated skills just above the expected level
Familiar Word Reading	54%	Above Average	The pupils demonstrated skills just above the expected level
Invented Word Decoding	34%	Low	The pupils demonstrated skills just below the expected level
Oral Passage Reading	24%	Low	The pupils demonstrated skills just below the expected level
Reading Comprehension	56%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level
Listening Comprehension	82%	Excellent	The pupils demonstrated superior skills relative to the expected level
Dictation	26%	Low	The pupils demonstrated skills just below the expected level
Overall HPS	394		
MS	172.29		
MPS	44%		
Competency Level	Average		The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level.

As presented in Table 5, reading competency is measured using ten (10) components: orientation to print, letter name knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, initial sound identification, familiar word reading, invented word reading, oral passage reading, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and diction. It can be observed that the 1<sup>st</sup>-grade pupils displayed low competencies in terms of invented word decoding, oral passage reading, and diction. However, pupils have also demonstrated average competency levels in letter names, letter-sound knowledge, and reading comprehension. Further, pupils posited at least above-average competency levels in the remaining components.

Consequently, this empirical evidence implies things that should be worked out before the pupils are promoted to the following levels, particularly

in a face-to-face setting. Although some pupils demonstrate an excellent reading competency level, the distribution is skewed to the right, which implies that a large percentage of the pupils have shown at least a low level of competency.

The numerical findings presented in Table 8 show substantial support for the experiences of the teachers and tutors that modular learning is indeed ineffective and challenging for grade 1 learners. Particularly in terms of reading, 1<sup>st</sup>-grade learners strongly need the constant guidance of the teacher, which still needs to be achieved in modular distance learning. Anzaldo’s (2021) study found that handling the grade 1 level during modular learning is the most challenging because these kinds of learners demand special attention and the physical presence of the designated teacher. In addition, one of the teacher respondents said, *“Based on my experience before the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching grade 1 pupils in the classroom is already hard; how much harder during modular learning, where pupils are expected to work most of the time independently?” But we do not have the choice to continue learning. Let’s hope they will learn just 10% of the desired learning competencies.”*

Table 6  
*Level of Competency of the Selected Grade 1 Pupil In Terms of Skills in Writing*

Writing Components	Mean Percentage Score (MPS)	Competency Level	Description
Writing Letters	78%	Above Average	The pupils demonstrated skills just above the expected level
Writing Simple Sentences/Phrases	64%	Above Average	The pupils demonstrated skills just above the expected level.
Overall HPS	8		
MS	5.66		
MPS	71%		
Competency Level	Above Average		The pupils demonstrated skills just above the expected level.

Table 6 shows the frequency distribution of grade 1 pupils in terms of their respective writing skills. Writing exercises with two components, namely,

writing letters and writing a sample sentence or phrase, were administered to the respondents. It can be gleaned from the same table that the pupils display either an average or above-average level of competency. The mean scores demonstrate above-average performance in writing letters, simple sentences, and phrases. In effect, the overall MPS of 71% suggests the above-average writing competency of the first-grade pupils.

The data presented in Table 6 reveals the remarkable writing skills of the pupils during modular distance learning. According to one of the tutors, writing has been fine for the pupils, who showed a positive attitude in every learning session. However, some pupils need to be more attentive to the instructions during the tutorials, and these pupils fail to complete writing tasks. Nevertheless, unlike the reading skills, the writing competence of most pupils is improved because writing activities contribute to more fun among children without much emphasis on comprehension. In support of the presented findings, one of the teacher respondents said, *“Writing exercises demand the most psychomotor activities, which most pupils enjoyed even before the pandemic. Pupils just want to write without comprehension involved.”*

Table 7

*Level of Competency of the Selected Grade 1 Pupil In Terms Of Skills, Numeracy*

Numeracy Components	Mean Percentage Score (MPS)	Competency Level	Description
Oral Counting	43%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level
Rational Counting	36%	Low	The pupils demonstrated skills just below the expected level
Number Naming Fluency	43%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level
Number Identification	52%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level

Number Discrimination	48%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level
Missing Number	46%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level
Addition Level 1	47%	Average	The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level
Overall HPS	251		
MS	102.62		
MPS	41%		The pupils demonstrated skills within the expected level.
Competency Level	Average		

Pupils' competency level in numeracy considers seven (7) components: oral counting, rational counting, number naming fluency, number identification, number discrimination, missing numbers, and addition level 1. It can be observed that the pupils are low in rational counting, as evidenced by the mean percentage score of 36%. On the other hand, the other six numeracy components are coupled with means that describe an average competency level. These figures consequently resulted in an overall MPS of only 41%, compared to the highest possible score of 251.

The empirical evidence that describes the pupils' numeracy skills depicts the specific challenge of modular learning. Basic numeracy skills are a very important indicator of performance in higher mathematics subjects. Harris and Pettersen (2019) emphasized that pupils who need more skills when entering kindergarten are likelier to fall behind their peers in the following grade level. Findings imply that before students are promoted to the next grade level, remedial classes must be taken for those who still need to meet the expectations. Pupils with poor skills in kindergarten are likelier to be behind their peers in the following grade level.

Problem 4: Based on the findings, what catching-up program can be designed to better prepare the learners for face-to-face classes?

Table 8 presents the catching-up program; considering the findings

derived from the previous analysis and discussions, an orientation program is proposed. The said program is offered to increase the preparedness of the graded pupils as they proceed to the next grade level in face-to-face classes. It contains specific objectives and activities so that desired targets will be achieved and a long-term outcome will be ensured.

Table 8  
*Catch-Up Program to Increase Pupils' Readiness for Face-To-Face Modality*

Objectives	Programs/ activities	Success Indicators	Means of Verification	Persons Involved	Time frame	Source of Funds	Expected outcome
To supplement the modules and instructional materials appropriate to the learning needs of the pupils	Conduct a school-based review of instructional materials	All modules and learning materials in all grade levels will be improved.	Checked and verified copies of modules and instructional materials in all grade levels	Teachers/ School heads/ District Supervisors	Yearly	MOOE	Better learning competencies and outcomes in reading, writing, and numeracy.
To strengthen parental support and collaboration	Conduct of parent-teacher meetings and collaboration activities	-90-100% of the parents will get involved in all school activities and provide learning assistance for their children	Monthly monitoring report on the percentage of parents involved in school activities and providing learning assistance to their children.	School heads/ District Supervisors/ Parents	Quarterly	MOOE	Better learning competencies and outcomes in reading, writing, and numeracy



To improve the readiness of the pupils on the lessons and desired learning competencies under the new normal.	Conduct review and remedial lessons for low-performing pupils under the MDL modality. These competencies are specified as follows;	90-100% of the students will be able to acquire the desired learning competencies that are requisites to the higher-grade levels	Quarterly MPS of the students	Teachers/ pupils/ GPTA	Quarterly MOOE	Better learning outcomes due to remedial class intervention
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invented word decoding</li> <li>2. Oral Reading</li> <li>3. Dictation, and</li> <li>4. Rational Counting</li> </ol>					

Table 8 is imbued with the general goal of achieving a high level of preparedness among pupils before they are promoted to the next grade level by providing improved learning materials, parental support, and conducting remedial sessions. All these activities constitute the proposed catch-up plan.

Using the key findings obtained from the discussions above, the first specific objective deals with supplementing the modules and instructional materials appropriate to the learning needs of the students. It will be achieved by conducting school-based reviews of all instructional materials, including the modules, which may be taken as one of the activities in the School Learning Action Cell, or SLAC. The second objective is to strengthen parental support and collaboration through the conduct of information drives for parents, meetings, and collaboration activities that will stimulate the strong participation of parents in all school activities, including educational support for their children. The said activity will be done quarterly and spearheaded by teachers and the school head.

The third objective is to improve the readiness of the students for the lessons and the desired learning competencies under the new normal. It will be attained by conducting reviews and remedial lessons for low-performing students under the MDL modality. Expenses incurred in the mentioned activities will be charged against Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses, or MOOE. Furthermore, the catch-up plan or program promotes better learning competencies and reading, writing, and numeracy outcomes.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research aligns closely with the foundational principles of constructivism, asserting that individuals actively construct knowledge through their experiences. The expressed negative sentiments from parents, teachers, and tutors toward modular distance learning (MDL) underscore the imperative for a proactive response to the inherent challenges of this educational approach. The livelihood concerns of parents and identified inadequacies in instructional materials highlight the crucial importance of actively integrating new information with existing knowledge, a central tenet of the constructivist paradigm.

The recommendation for enhancements in instructional materials and ongoing collaboration between teachers and parents resonates with the constructivist notion that individuals consistently adapt and modify their understanding based on experiences. Teachers' willingness to improve instructional materials and collaborate with parents reflects an active construction of knowledge to address the challenges identified during MDL.

Acknowledging the immediate need for action or intervention to enhance reading and numeracy skills among grade 1 pupils aligns seamlessly with the constructivist concept that learners actively build their knowledge. The call for intervention recognizes that experiences and challenges during MDL demand an active response to shape and enhance the learning outcomes of grade 1 pupils.

Furthermore, the suggestion to develop and implement a catch-up plan to address learning deficits before promoting grade 1 pupils aligns with the constructivist emphasis on contextualized solutions. Recognizing and addressing the challenges faced during MDL reflects an active and adaptive approach to constructing knowledge, emphasizing the necessity for targeted interventions tailored to the experiences and needs of the learners.

The socially constructed negative perceptions of teachers, parents, and tutors regarding MDL underscore a shared understanding that reflects the challenges experienced by grade 1 learners. These shared sentiments, rooted in broader socio-economic factors and a belief in the integral role of instructional materials, underline the socially constructed viewpoint shaping educational practices and provide valuable insights for future educational endeavors.

## TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

This translational research framework strongly advocates for the Department of Education (DepEd) to integrate its findings into policymaking, emphasizing the practical implications of insights from teachers, parents, and tutors. These challenges are viewed not in isolation but as catalysts for positive

transformations in school improvement plans and broader educational systems. Schools are envisioned as dynamic entities, with the learning action cell as a practical application platform.

The call to invest time in reviewing modules and enhancing instructional materials underscores tangible, classroom-level interventions. Proposing remedial sessions aligns with the translational paradigm, championing a practical, real-world response to learning gaps.

Emphasizing stakeholder collaboration signifies a robust translational approach, insisting on translating collaborative ideals into practical measures for tangible contributions to educational system improvement.

This comprehensive framework strongly advocates for the practical application of insights within education, pressing for active incorporation into planning and policymaking for effective contributions to system enhancement.

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