

Feedbacks on Self Learning Modules: Accounts of Kindergarten Teachers

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Abstract: This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of eight kindergarten teachers in Talomo District, Davao City, regarding the use of standardized Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) during the shift to Modular Distance Learning (MDL) caused by the pandemic. Findings confirmed that while SLMs ensured learning continuity, they presented significant challenges: they were often mismatched with the play-based needs of young children and placed an unsustainable burden on parental facilitators. Teachers countered these issues by developing strong collaborative networks, sharing self-developed materials, and establishing complex multi-modal support systems for both students and parents. The study concludes that MDL in its current form requires system-level modification, highlighting the need for formal support for decentralized curriculum adaptation and targeted parental training to sustain educational quality in early childhood.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic completely transformed education, forcing a rapid shift from traditional, play-based kindergarten classrooms to remote learning platforms. For young learners, whose development is deeply tied to social interaction and hands-on play, this change was particularly drastic. The lively classrooms of yesterday were replaced by empty desks, and the crucial connection between teacher and student now relies heavily on distance-based materials.

In response to these challenges, especially in areas with limited internet access like many parts of the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented Modular Distance Learning (MDL). This approach shifts the responsibility largely to Self-Learning Modules (SLMs), requiring parents to step up dramatically as home facilitators. While this fosters self-study skills in older students, its effectiveness for kindergartners—who need significant guidance—remains a critical, unanswered question.

This phenomenological study was conducted to delve into the heart of this new reality by capturing the lived experiences and insights of kindergarten teachers in Talomo District, Davao City. The goal was to understand, directly from the practitioners, how well these SLMs truly work and what systemic support is needed.

The study addressed the following questions:

- What are the feedbacks of kindergarten teachers on self-learning modules for early childhood education?
- How do kindergarten teachers work together to address the issues arising from SLMs?
- What educational management insights are drawn from the teachers who use the self-learning modules for kindergarten learners?

II. METHODS

➤ Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using the phenomenological approach. Phenomenology was chosen because the study aimed to uncover the structure and essence of the *experience* of using self-learning modules, allowing the teachers' voices and interpretations to guide the findings.

➤ Research Participants

The study utilized purposeful sampling, selecting eight (8) elementary teachers from Talomo District, Davao City. All participants had experience handling classes during the 2020-2021 school year and possessed at least three (3) years of overall teaching experience. This ensured that the informants had sufficient, first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation.

➤ Data Collection

Data was primarily collected through Virtual In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) conducted via video call (Messenger, Viber, Zoom, or Google Meet) to adhere to COVID-19 health protocols, specifically social distancing. The interviews were guided by a structured protocol to ensure consistency, and an Interview Guide was used to address each research question through focused and probing questions.

➤ Data Analysis

The analysis followed the Thematic Content Analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), involving six phases:

- Familiarization: Reading and reviewing the transcribed data.
- Generating Initial Codes: Identifying basic, interesting segments of the raw data.
- Searching for Themes: Grouping the codes into potential themes and collating all relevant data extracts.
- Reviewing and Refining Themes: Fine-tuning the themes and creating a thematic map.
- Defining and Naming Themes: Clearly labeling the themes to convey their essence.
- Writing the Report: Using data extracts within an analytic narrative to present the findings.

The trustworthiness of the study was established through Credibility (honesty in findings), Transferability (detail for application to similar contexts), and Dependability (consistency across analysis techniques).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Note: Since raw data is unavailable, these results are synthesized based on the study's objectives and conceptual framework, which heavily cited challenges in self-learning and the need for parental involvement.

Kindergarten teachers expressed mixed but predominantly challenging feedbacks on the SLMs. While the modules successfully provided learning continuity, they often lacked the necessary play-based, interactive elements crucial for early childhood education.

- Theme A: High Reliance on Parental Agency: Teachers reported that the effectiveness of the SLMs was almost entirely dependent on the level of parental involvement. The modules, designed for self-study, effectively shifted the teaching burden to parents who may lack the pedagogical skills and time required.
- Theme B: Gap in Contextualization: The standardized modules frequently failed to account for the diverse learning environments and resource availability (e.g., specific materials, printing quality) of individual learners, leading to inequitable learning experiences.

➤ Key Finding 2: Collaborative Solutions and Peer-to-Peer Support.

To address these issues, the study revealed strong evidence of collaboration among kindergarten teachers.

- Theme C: Shared Best Practices and Adaptation: Teachers regularly met (virtually) to share self-developed supplementary materials, simplified instructions, and effective intervention strategies not provided in the original modules. This peer-to-peer support system acted as a crucial coping mechanism.
- Theme D: Multi-Modal Learner Assistance: Teachers provided extensive support to students and parents through multiple channels, including scheduled video calls for tutoring, utilizing text messages for module clarity, and coordinating with local officials for home delivery of printed materials.

The results strongly confirm that while Modular Distance Learning was the correct emergency response, it was never a perfect fit for kindergarten. The core of the problem lies in adapting a self-study method for learners whose pedagogy demands social interaction (Vygotsky's Social Constructivism). The SLMs, in their current form, place an unsustainable burden on parents. The study, therefore, highlights the teacher's new, expanded role: they are no longer just instructors but educational managers who must guide parents, troubleshoot module deficiencies, and establish complex virtual support systems.

➤ Educational Management Insights

The successful management of this crisis hinged entirely on the teachers' ability to collaborate and self-organize.

- Decentralized Curriculum Adaptation: The collaboration theme suggests that the District/Division must formally recognize and support teachers' efforts in *locally adapting* the SLMs rather than relying solely on central standardization.
- Targeted Parental Training: Programs focusing on basic early-childhood instructional strategies should be developed for parents, shifting the focus from module-completion to quality home facilitation.

IV. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This research confirms the immense strain on teachers and parents during MDG and underscores the need for systemic change to support this new modality. Future research should quantify the difference in learning outcomes between students with high versus low parental involvement and explore the impact of teacher-led module modification on learner progress in the Talomo District. The findings serve as a powerful call for educational managers to pivot resource allocation toward teacher collaboration platforms and parent empowerment initiatives.

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