

## EXPERIENCES OF THE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS IN TEACHING READING THROUGH MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING MODALITY

BY

Josephine B. Roda<sup>1\*</sup>, Mary Jane A. Abellanosa<sup>2</sup>, Helen O. Revalde<sup>3</sup>, Reylan G. Capuno<sup>3</sup>, Gengen G. Padillo<sup>3</sup>, Ramil P. Manguilimotan<sup>3</sup>, Emerson D. Peteros<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Teacher 1, Talamban Elementary School

<sup>2</sup> Preschool Teacher, Abundant Grace Learning Center

<sup>3</sup> College of Education, Cebu Technological University-Main Campus



### Article History

Received: 24/10/2023

Accepted: 31/10/2023

Published: 02/11/2023

### Corresponding author:

Josephine B. Roda

### Abstract

This research explored the experiences of kindergarten teachers in teaching reading through modular distance learning modality at the two public elementary schools in Cebu City, Philippines. It employed the phenomenological research design using purposive sampling to highlight teachers' experiences in teaching reading to the kindergarten learners. There were 12 participants in the study who were interviewed through the aid of an interview guide and audio recording material to ensure the accuracy of data. Thematic Analysis was used to process the responses of the participants. The study revealed that the teachers provided learning materials such as printed and digital materials and collaborate with parents to teach reading to the learners. Teachers encountered challenges such as having lack of communication with parents, difficulty in assessing learning, parent's lack of time and competency in teaching reading. However, they find strategies to address these challenges like providing reading enhancement activities and monitoring the learners. Hence, it is recommended that teachers innovate strategies to teaching reading to the learners and enhance parent-teacher collaboration in teaching reading to the learners through modular distance learning.

**Keywords:** Instructional Methods, Challenges, Strategies, Reading, Modular Distance Learning

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is an integral part of child's learning development as it is considered as one of the basic skills that is useful as they continue to explore the world (Tohara, 2021). Starting early childhood, reading is already introduced in school. However, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has greatly affected the day-to-day life of individuals in all aspect of the society which includes the educational system. In the midst of COVID-19, schools were shifted to different modalities that do not require physical interaction among teachers and pupils to avoid further infection of this disease (Rahmatullah, & Ghufuron, 2021). During this time of pandemic, teaching reading to preschool has been a challenging task due to the limitations brought by the current situation. The pandemic provides different challenges for preschool teachers in terms of reading instruction in an effective way (Atiles et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, the government imposed a complete lockdown on all schools and the government set guidelines on how to manage the COVID-19 crisis in the country. In order to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of learners, teachers, and Department of Education (DepEd) personnel during the crisis, DepEd established a framework termed as Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BELCP). This framework provides guidance on how to deliver education in the country during the time of crisis which includes guidelines on classroom assessment, working at home, attending webinars, moving up, graduation/recognition rites, and various alternatives to deliver distance learning during periods of class suspension or similar circumstances (DepEd, 2020).

Relative to the government safety protocols for COVID-19, DepEd

implemented the modular distance learning wherein students are not required to report to school instead parents have to get the modules in school which the teachers provide to the students. Obviously, learning instruction is affected because traditional teaching where students learn their lessons in school is no longer possible during this time. Teaching reading to the preschool learners is one of the most affected in instruction. Preschool teachers have difficulties in teaching reading to preschool learners because this requires learners to be physically present when reading instruction and assessment is conducted (Timmons et al., 2021). Hence, the reading skills of the learners could be affected. Learners' lack of basic reading skills could affect their reading comprehension which has been a persistent concern of the country over the past years (Tomas et al., 2021).

In 2018, Philippines scored the lowest in reading comprehension in the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) among 79 participating countries and economies (Cabural & Infantado, 2023; Haw et al., 2021). PISA is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that examines students' knowledge in reading, mathematics, and science. Reading was the main subject assessed among students in the 2018 PISA. The Philippines had an average reading score of 340, more than 200 points below China (555) and more than 100 points less than the OECD average (487). In the Philippines, boys' and girls' performances in reading both ranked lowest among PISA-participating countries (Misanes & Pascual, 2023). Based from this result, it manifests that teaching-learning process in reading must have rigid foundation in order to form quality learners in the future.

Early stages of reading development create impact for a lifelong learner (Hanemann, 2019). Furthermore, a child with enhanced reading skills in an early age promotes academic success in the next level of education as this skill is applied to all other learning areas (Kokkalia et al., 2019). With the implementation of modular distance learning, many educators have struggles in teaching reading to the learners because of the physical limitations among teacher and pupils. However, instructions must continue despite the difficult situation between the teachers and the learners. Education for the learners must continue despite the teachers' limited reading resources for the learners. In many cases, teachers utilize instructional methods that are appropriate to the needs of their learners. Although not every learner's needs are addressed immediately, strategies to enhance their instructions are also considered.

Hence, the researchers wish to investigate the instructional methods, challenges, and strategies utilized by teachers in modular distance learning at the two identified public elementary schools in Cebu City, Philippines. It is aimed to propose an action plan to address the challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching reading to the learners. With these, high-quality education will still be achieved despite the newly introduced learning modality.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research investigated the preschool teacher's experiences in teaching reading through MDL during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following problems:

1. How do preschool teachers teach reading through MDL?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the preschool teachers in teaching reading through MDL?
3. What are the strategies employed by the preschool teachers to minimize the challenges they encounter in teaching reading through MDL?

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a phenomenological research design which describes the preschool teachers' experiences in teaching reading through modular distance learning. This highlights teachers' personal experiences concerning their teaching in reading and the challenges they encountered which involves investigating phenomena through their experiences. Purposive sampling technique is used in choosing the participants that is anchored from non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their study (Matekenya, 2023). The participants of the study were the 12 preschool teachers of the two identified public elementary schools in Cebu City, Philippines.

Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from personal experiences concerning their instructional methods, strategies, and challenges in teaching reading through modular distance learning. Researchers conducted a recorded one-on-one interview while the data gathered were transcribed and coded. Then, themes and sub-themes were formulated according to the patterns found in the codes. Finally, these themes were discussed by the researchers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents, interprets, and analyzes the data gathered based on the instructional methods used by the participants, challenges they encountered, and the strategies they used to minimize these challenges.

### Instructional Methods Used

Reading is an essential skill that is taught to individuals as early as kindergarten. However, teaching reading during the pandemic was quite challenging for the early childhood educators due to its limitations. With the implementation of MDL during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have to find ways to ensure the continuity of education despite the limitations of the modality. Particularly, preschool teachers who are teaching reading to their learners innovate to ensure continuity of instruction despite the absence of the classroom. Below are the instructional methods used by the participants to teaching reading to learners through MDL.

#### 1. Printed Modules

Since learners are not allowed to report to school because of the restrictions implemented, teachers provide printed materials for the learners to read which parents will fetch in school. Participants created schedules to allow the parents to claim the modules. Moreover, they reinforced these with the scheduled virtual meeting with learners where they can let them read the materials provided to them and provide them.

*"Yes, we have printed modules but then with regards to reading, we need still need to assist them through the online platform (P5)*

*"By giving the parents the papers, the reading materials on a scheduled basis."(P10)*

Participants stated above that they provides printed modules to teach reading. They also reached out to learners using online platform to teach reading so they will be able to learn even though the learning environment has shifted from school to home. Printed modules are distributed to parents and guardians of the learner on a weekly basis. These modules contain reading activities for learners. Since learners have to learn at home, the teachers collaborate with the parents in so that they can instruct the parents to let their child read at home using the activities found in the module. Other than that, teachers meet the learners through online and let their learners read the activities in the module while the teacher monitors the learners virtually.

## 2. Digital Reading Materials

Aside from printed modules, teachers have the initiatives to reinforcement the learning materials by providing digital reading materials to parents who have access to the internet.

Participant 3 enumerated additional methods that she used in teaching reading to kindergarten learners aside from printed modules with the guidance of their parents. As stated below:

*"By giving them online reading videos, and meet them individually via online for follow-up and also Ma'am we give supplementary activities for them to work at home by the guidance of their parents." (P3)*

*"Uh we're going to follow the given modules and give the links of the digital reading materials to the parents who have gadgets and have internet connection." (P9)*

*"Ah sometimes we're going to use online then utilize digital modules for those who are going to ask for softcopy." (P12)*

Participants stated that they provide digital modules to parents. Digital modules are softcopy files of the modules that are sent to the learner online also on a weekly basis. It was a necessity for the teachers, learners, and parents to work together in order to implement this new normal teaching-learning procedure. The digitized learning materials serve as supplementary reading materials for the learners which they can utilize at home with the aid of the parents. Having this modality require that parents or other members of the family to take part in the teaching-learning process because learners learn at home.

Based on the statements of participants above, it displays the different learning tools that preschool teachers provide in order to promote and develop the reading skills of their learners despite the changes and limitations brought about by the pandemic. It also highlighted the role of the parents and guardians play an important part in implementing the new normal education for kindergarten learners (Kintanar et al., 2021). They serve as a bridge between the teacher and learner in order to achieve learning objectives most especially in reading. With the absence of a teacher at home, parents can encourage their child to read with their presence and do

these regularly (Ferri et al., 2020). Moreover, teachers will be able to monitor the learner's progress by coordinating with parents and provide scheduled reading tasks to the learners that will serve as the parent's guide in home reading activities.

Parental involvement in children's learning interests has a positive and significant impact on children's learning interests at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parental involvement includes caring for the child and helping the child accomplish academic tasks. It means helping each other, participating in school and community activities, making decisions and setting rules, etc. Parental involvement is very important as parents, along with schools, engage schools on the rules of health protocols and as a learning strategy for children under COVID-19 (Dini, 2021).

## Challenges Encountered

MDL is new in the teaching-learning process for the teachers. Thus, they still need to adjust to the modality to ensure that effective instruction is delivered despite the teacher-learner contact limitations because learners receive instructions at home. Hence, parents and teachers have to establish collaboration to ease up the challenges of implementing MDL. However, challenges are still encountered by the participants during the delivery of the instruction. Here, these challenges are enumerated:

### 1. Lack of Communication

In order to have a smooth implementation of MDL, parents, and teachers have to establish a strong line of communication so that teachers are always updated with the learner's progress. However, some parents are difficult to reach because of different reasons.

*"The parents' communication, some parents do not communicate with us, uh some parents are very difficult to reach."(P1)*

*"The different challenges the we have encountered are the means of communication specially to those parents who don't have the gadget." (P7)*

*"We encountered problems on the communication with our learners because parents are not available." (P3)*

### 2. Parent's Lack of Time

The time that parents can spend with their children assisting in their school tasks is one of their common struggles. With the MDL implementation, it requires more time for parents to assist their child because their child should learn at home however most parents cannot extend their time assisting their child in their school tasks. Hence, the teachers encounter these challenges as stated by some participants below:

*"The time frame because I have to adjust with their availability, not my availability but their availability." (P6)*

*"Because some of our parents lack time to assist their child since they are also working parents. They don't have time to contact or communicate to teachers but as a teacher, we will do our part to reach for them." (P11)*

*"Some parents cannot claim the modules because they are busy at work."(P10)*

*"The parents do not claim and submit the modules of their child on time." (P8)*

Parent's role in the MDL implementation is very important for the success of the teaching-learning process especially in teaching reading to the learners. Parents act as teachers to their child at home while they are guided by the modules provided by the teachers (Sumbilon & Valmorida, 2023). However, if parents cannot spend enough time for their child's school tasks at home the child's learning process will be put at risk. The extent of importance of the parent's presence in their child's learning process particularly in learning to read is very high. That is why if they cannot perform these duties, other members of the family may take place.

### 3. Difficulty in Assessment of Learning

The concept of instructional delivery includes the assessment of what skills the students has learned. Assessing the students' learning in MDL instruction is very challenging for teachers, especially in terms of assessing the reading skills of the learners.

Participant 1 uttered the difficulty in assessing the learners' reading development skills since they only meet the parents and cannot meet the child individually. She uttered that:

*"We cannot assess the learners one by one because it's the parents who come to us to get the modules so we will not have direct contact with the learners" (P1)*

She acknowledged the circumstance that there is a great transformation from the previous teaching-learning process.

Participant 2 stated that learners in the MDL education displays low performance in reading development because of the distractions at home such too much play time. She opined that:

*"It is difficult to assess the learners on how to produce the sounds of the letters because we have to do it online every time we assess their reading skills especially the formation of their mouth when producing sounds" (P2)*

Participants 6 and 8 stated below that they couldn't assess the learners since they don't meet them face-to-face. They uttered that:

*"One of our challenges is identifying whether the learners are able to read." (P6)*

*"We cannot follow up the progress of the reading skills of the learners because we cannot meet them face-to-face." (P8)*

During the implementation of modular distance learning modality, teachers often met the parents instead of the learners. In that case, they could not assess the learners on their development in reading. Teachers rely their assessment on what they see from their learners through online sessions (Rapanta et al., 2020). They claimed that learners are assessed more effectively if they do it face-to-face.

### 4. Parents' Competency in Teaching Reading

Since parents served as a bridge between teachers and learners during the implementation of MDL, they are expected to ensure the learning development of their child with the guidance of the teachers. However, teachers expressed worries on the competencies of parents in teaching reading to their children.

Participant 10 stated below the uncertainty that she feels when she communicates with the parent regarding the learning development of the child. She elucidates that:

*"When I asked the parents about their child's progress, they will say that they do not know if they ." (P10)*

Participant 2 expressed her view that parents also have struggles in teaching their child at home because they are not well informed with the strategies, techniques, and methods that should be used in teaching reading to young learners. She explained that:

*"Some parents do not know how to assist their child on what to read in the module." (P2)*

Assessment of learning in MDL is quite unreliable as what the teacher had stated, because parents have hesitations to convey the authentic performance of their child at home since it will reflect their competencies as home learning partners of their child.

The educational environment, both at home and at school, is clearly maladapted to the situation caused by the pandemic. Parents' efforts to accept the changing reality and the need to constantly adapt made their psychophysical abilities inadequate to cope (Parczewska, 2021). Given the experience of homeschooling during the pandemic, truly creative adaptation appears to be the only way for humanity to keep pace with the world's kaleidoscopic changes.

## Strategies Employed

Teachers have to deal with the challenges they encountered in the MDL implementation. Hence, some strategies were employed by the participants to minimize these challenges as enumerated below.

### 1. Reading Enhancement Activities

Participants enumerate some reading enhancement strategies that they employ in order to minimize the challenges that they encounter in teaching reading. Participant 2 stated that she conducts virtual meet-up to parents and learners so she could convey to the parents on how to teach reading and meet her pupils as well. She explained that:

*"To address concerns on learners' reading difficulties, I conducted remedial reading activities virtually." (P2)*

To maximize pupils' development of reading skills, participants also provided additional learning materials such as reading drills, references of reading videos, and pictures that would help the learners. Participant 3 stated that:

*"I send them reading materials like short stories, pictures, and references through facebook" (P3)*

She highlighted above that these learning materials ignite the interest of child in learning how to read which proves the usefulness of the efforts exerted by the participants.

As what they say, it takes a community to raise a child, hence, teachers tap other stakeholders to work together in teaching reading to kindergarten learners. Participant 12 uttered this statement."

"We conducted a reading program for the learners called Brigada Pagbasa." (P12)

Bridaga Pagbasa is stipulated in the DepEd Memorandum No. 173 series of 2019 that address the gaps in the low performance of learners in reading skills. Department of Education states in this memorandum that there is a need to strengthen the reading proficiency of every learner and to nurture a culture of reading which is a requisite skill in all content areas (Bagolong & Usop, 2021).

In response to this memorandum, teachers took this opportunity as a strategy to look for partners in implementing the memo that would greatly benefit the reading development of the learners. Participant 6 stated that:

"We have Brigada Pagbasa. in our school and we tap other stakeholders like the youth organization in the community to assist us with the program ."(P6)

## 2. Monitoring of Learners

To ensure that learning still takes place even though learners are at home in MDL, teachers conduct monitoring to pupils through the help of parents. Participant 7 explained that in her statement that:

"We give reading materials to the learners and conduct a follow-up if they use the materials given."(P7)

She stated above that she conducts follow-up to the learners on their reading development through the use of the materials they provided.

Participant 6 added that parents provide videos of their children on their development in reading and she conducts quick face-to-face assessment whenever their parents bring them to school when claiming modules. She stated that:

"Some parents send videos about the reading sessions of their child while others bring their child in school so that I can let them read." (P6)

Indirect learning also forces teachers, parents, and students to make extra efforts to adapt to a new educational culture during the COVID-19 pandemic. Possible solutions to overcome the problem include improving the information and communication technology proficiency of teachers, increasing the ability of parents to support their children, and increasing discipline among children, among others (Munastiwi & Puryono, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

This research aimed at investigating the experiences of preschool teachers in teaching reading to the learners. Findings revealed that through the effort of teachers, with the support of parents during the implementation of modular distance learning modality, kindergarten learners are provided with varied learning opportunities that promotes the development of their reading skills in spite of the challenges encountered. Teaching reading during modular distance learning modality was not an easy endeavor to our teachers however they have surpassed the hurdles through an optimistic outlook and manifesting positive behavior. By all counts,

reading development in kindergarten is not a problem when both teachers and parents work collaboratively despite of the limitations in modular distance learning modality.

## RECOMMENDATION

In light of the findings of this study, the researchers recommend that strong teacher-parent collaboration is established to promote smooth delivery of instruction to the learners during the MDL implementation because parents need to reinforce the teachers' instruction when the child needs to learn at home. Parents should not rely the learning of their children to the teachers alone especially on the early stages of development of their child because at this stage the child needs more assistance while learning the expected skills. Reading is one of the skills that the child needs to acquire. Hence, parents and teachers must be directed towards the same goals of the child's reading development. This can be realized when teachers and parents establish a well-defined communication channel towards the child's reading skills development.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research is a product of the collaboration of the university's professors and research adviser's guidance, comments, suggestions, and recommendations. Therefore, we would like to acknowledge their invaluable contribution in the development of this study.

## REFERENCES

1. Tohara, A. J. T. (2021). Exploring digital literacy strategies for students with special educational needs in the digital age. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)*, 12(9), 3345-3358.
2. Rahmatullah, A. S., & Ghufroon, S. (2021). The Effectiveness Offacebook'as Indonesian Language Learning Media For Elementary School Student: Distance Learning Solutions In The Era Of The Covid-19 Pandemic. *Multicultural education*, 7(04), 27-37.
3. Atilas, J. T., Almodóvar, M., Chavarría Vargas, A., Dias, M. J., & Zúñiga León, I. M. (2021). International responses to COVID-19: Challenges faced by early childhood professionals. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 29(1), 66-78.
4. Timmons, K., Cooper, A., Bozek, E., & Braund, H. (2021). The impacts of COVID-19 on early childhood education: Capturing the unique challenges associated with remote teaching and learning in K-2. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 49(5), 887-901.
5. Tomas, M. J. L., Villaros, E. T., & Galman, S. M. A. (2021). The perceived challenges in reading of learners: Basis for school reading programs. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(5), 107-122.
6. Haw, J. Y., King, R. B., & Trinidad, J. E. R. (2021). Need supportive teaching is associated with greater reading achievement: What the Philippines can learn from PISA 2018. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 110, 101864.

7. Cabural, A. B., & Infantado, E. J. S. (2023). The Difficulty of Reading Comprehension and the Proficiency of the Grade 10 Students of Aloran Trade High School, Philippines. *Journal of Tertiary Education and Learning*, 1(2), 23-29.
8. Misanes, C. H. G., & Pascual, E. (2023). Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Performance of Grade 8 Students: Basis for a Reading Intervention Program. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 13(3), 276-290.
9. Hanemann, U. (2019). Examining the application of the lifelong learning principle to the literacy target in the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4). *International Review of Education*, 65(2), 251-275.
10. Kokkalia, G., Drigas, A. S., Economou, A., & Roussos, P. (2019). School Readiness From Kindergarten to Primary School. *Int. J. Emerg. Technol. Learn.*, 14(11), 4-18.
11. Matekenya, D. J. (2023). Degrees of Autonomy: A comparative analysis of governance autonomy for private, faith-based and public universities in Malawi. *International Journal of Educational Policy Research and Review*, 11(1), 33.
12. Kintanar, F. C., Elladora, S. T., & Cuizon, F. R. (2021). Plight of the parents of the Filipino learners in the implementation of the modular distance learning. *International Journal of Educational Science and Research*, 11(2), 35-48.
13. Ferri, F., Grifoni, P., & Guzzo, T. (2020). Online learning and emergency remote teaching: Opportunities and challenges in emergency situations. *Societies*, 10(4), 86.
14. Dini, J. P. A. U. (2021). Influence of parent involvement to children's learning interest during corona virus pandemic. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini [Journal of Obsession: Journal of Education for Children and Youth]*, 5(2), 2050-2058.
15. Sumbilon, M. R., & Valmorida, J. S. (2023). Teaching Strategies, Parental Involvement, TVL Learners' Self-Efficacy and Performance in Modular Distance Learning. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 11(10), 658-669.
16. Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2020). Online university teaching during and after the COVID-19 crisis: Refocusing teacher presence and learning activity. *Postdigital science and education*, 2, 923-945.
17. Parczewska, T. (2021). Difficult situations and ways of coping with them in the experiences of parents homeschooling their children during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland. *Education 3-13*, 49(7), 889-900.
18. Bagolong, N., & Usop, A. (2021). Reading Skills of Elementary Pupils as Basis for an Intervention Plan: The Case of Don E. Sero Elementary School, Philippines. *JPAIR Institutional Research*, 16(1), 13-27.
19. Munastiwi, E., & Puryono, S. (2021). Unprepared management decreases education performance in kindergartens during Covid-19 pandemic. *Heliyon*, 7(5).