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Preparedness of Senior High School Students and Modular Distance Learning Education in the New Normal: A Framework for a Plan of Action

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Abstract

The quantitative approach, particularly the descriptive-comparative research design, was utilized to assess the extent of the preparedness of the senior high school students for distance modular learning education in the new normal in terms of their study skills, motivation, and time management. There were 120 participants in the study who were composed of students from the Academic Track and Technical Vocational Livelihood Track. The questionnaire served as the principal instrument of the analysis. The data analysis was carried out using ANOVA, z-test, frequency, percentage, and weighted mean. The study results revealed that the disadvantages of modular distance learning education prevail more than its advantages. Thus, one's preparedness is influential and significant to the success of distance learning education. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the students' preparedness to modular learning when grouped according to their age. The same result also showed that there is no significant difference in the students' preparedness to modular learning when grouped according to sex, while there is a significant difference in the extent of students' preparedness to modular learning when grouped according to their senior high school track. The researchers suggest the crafting of the plan of action should be worked out together with the School Planning Team to give proper resources and allocation in the Annual Implementation Plan and School Improvement Plan of the school, which are also part of the School-Based Management, whose priority is to improve the school and students' performances.

Keywords: modular distance learning, students' preparedness, students' performance, motivation, skills

Introduction

Reports around the globe about the interruption of classes have affected and impacted over 60% of the world's student population, according to UNESCO (2020). The data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics showed on August 08, 2020, that 1,058,824,335 learners were affected by 106 country-wide closures. The Philippines is one of the countries that called for class suspension as COVID-19 started to spread in the archipelago. About 27 million Filipino

learners and 1 million teachers and non-teaching staff were affected by the closure of schools and universities in the country because of the threat of COVID-19 (Obana 2020).

The disruption caused by COVID-19 is the turning point for the Department of Education to search for new ways of delivering learning instructions to its students and introduce innovations in teaching the learners in the new normal scheme. The Department of Education has introduced new modalities to deliver instructions to students. These modalities include Online Distance Learning, Modular Distance Learning, and TV/Radio-Based Instruction. Private and public elementary and secondary schools were given a Readiness Assessment Checklist for Implementing Learning Delivery Modalities to guide and assess which options could be best adopted and implemented in their respective institutions.

For places where internet connection is poor and cannot penetrate remote areas, some schools opt to go to modular distance learning. Modular Distance Learning involves individualized instruction that allows learners to use self-learning modules (SLM) in print or digital format/ electronic copy, whichever is applicable in the context of the learner (Llego, et. al). This approach is also the top choice of enrollees so far according to the Department of Education and revealed that the partial results of the Learner Enrollment and Survey Forms show 7.2 million enrollees prefer to use modular distance learning (Ciriaco 2020).

The students who are used to physical teaching instructions are now shifting to the new normal scheme of the Department of Education. The Alfreda Albano National High School is a public secondary high school located in Cabagan, province of Isabela is adopting a modular distance approach in delivering learning instructions to its students. These students are not heavily exposed to this kind of set-up wherein the researchers would like to examine the preparedness of these students to the modular distance learning and to investigate the challenges experienced by them while doing the said approach.

Conceptual Framework

The influx of modern forms of technology allows everyone to enjoy learning and discovering new things in their own space. This paves the way for the different approaches to teaching and learning. As pandemic arises, this has forced schools to close and look for ways on how to deliver instructions to students. Modular distance learning is one of the approaches that is heavily used today as social distancing and staying at home are implemented to not acquire the virus. Modular distance learning features individualized instruction that allows learners to use self-learning modules in print or digital format/ electronic copy, whichever is applicable to the learner. As the Philippine Basic Education system defies what is normal there are studies also that can provide that modular distance learning has some advantages. Many scholars have generally agreed that modular degrees have many advantages for students in terms of their capacity to offer flexibility, choice, access, and mobility (French 2015). In the study of Rodeiro and Nadas (2011) they have identified a number of advantages of modularization and one of these is flexibility. According to their study, a well-designed and constructed modular curriculum might well offer students more flexibility and variety than other, more conventional, forms of curricular organization. Another advantage that is pointed out in the study of Rodeiro and Nadas (2011) is ownership and Thomson (1988) argues that a modular curriculum helps both teachers

and students develop an ownership of the study program. Moreover, there is an improved student-teacher relationship as teachers and students need to negotiate short-term goals, planning and teaching the methods, they will build an effective working relationship. Another advantage in the modular distance learning still based on the study of Rodeiro and Nadal is the regular feedback, as modular assessments provide regular feedback to students. In addition, McClune (2001) argues that regular feedback to pupils and teachers on performance is a perceived benefit from modularization. These claims about the advantages of modular instruction have also been supported by the study of Dochy et. al (1989) that modular instruction provides more choice and self-pacing for students; more variety and flexibility for teachers and staff; and increased adaptability of instructional materials. These support studies have been the foundations of why the modular distance learning approach is still existing and still in used for delivering learning instructions to students. However, despite of the advantages, there are still disadvantages that emerged in the conduct of the modular distance learning approach. In addition to the study conducted by Dochy et.al (1989), they pointed out that these disadvantages include greater self-discipline and self-motivation required for students, increased preparation time and lack of concrete rewards for teachers and staff, and greater administrative resources needed to track students and operate multiple modules. According to Valentine (2002), not all students are suited to this type of learning and not all subjects are best taught via this kind of medium. He emphasizes that mature students are the most likely to find success with distance learning. Thekeld and Brzoska (1994) in Valentine (2002), pointed out that to be a successful student in this kind of approach, one must have a number of characteristics such as tolerance for ambiguity, a need for autonomy, and an ability to be flexible. In addition, Hardy and Boaz (1997) in Valentine (2002) found that compared to most face-to-face learning environments, distance learning requires students to be more focused, better time managers and to be able to work independently. With the promising advantages of modular distance learning to aid students' learning in the current situation, challenges are still inevitable. Based on the pieces of evidence provided by the different researchers in their respective studies, now this becomes the ground for the researcher to make an analysis on the preparedness of the senior high school students for the modular distance learning approach and to make interventions on the challenges experienced by them.

Research Paradigm

The illustration below shows how the modular distance learning approach influences students' preparedness in terms of their study skills, motivation, and time management skills. To address the challenges experienced by the students, a plan of action will be crafted.

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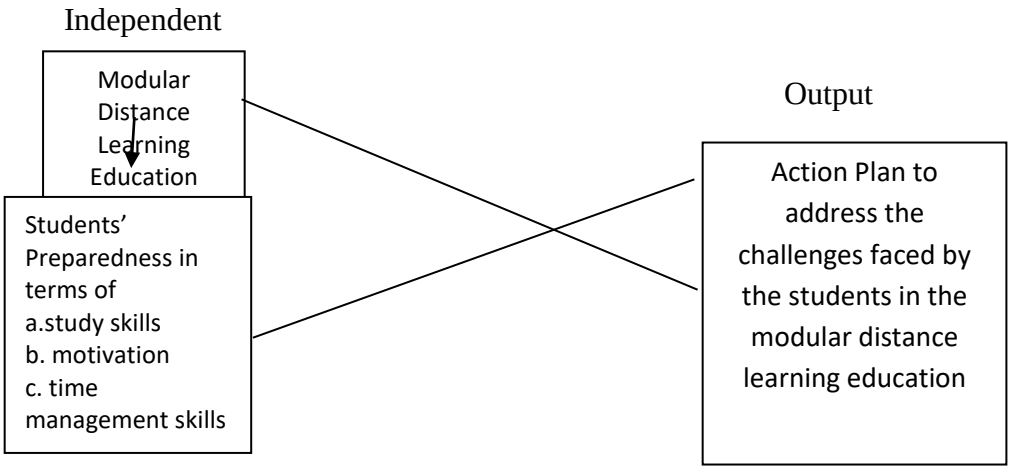

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to assess students' preparedness to modular learning in the new normal of Alfreda Albano National High School Grade 12 Senior High School students.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
   a. Age
   b. Sex
   c. SHS Track
2. What is the extent of students' preparedness to modular learning in terms of:
   a. study skills
   b. motivation
   c. time management skills?
3. Is there a significant difference in the extent of students' preparedness to modular learning when grouped according to profile variables?
4. What are the challenges experienced by the students in modular learning?
5. What plan of action can be formulated to address the challenges experienced by the students in modular learning?

Research Methodology

Participants of the Study

The Grade 12 senior high school students of Alfreda Albano National High School, School Year 2021–2022, served as the participants of this study, which was composed of 120 sample participants determined through statistical analysis using a z-score. The participants in the study came from two different tracks: the Academic Track and the Technical Vocational Livelihood Track. This study assessed their readiness for modular distance learning education and identified the challenges they faced while completing the modular distance learning education. They were selected through a simple random sampling technique.

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Research Design

This research used a descriptive-comparative research design that aims to assess students' preparedness to modular distance learning education when grouped according to their profile variables.

Instrumentation

This research utilized a survey questionnaire that was patterned after the tool used by Tuntirojanawong (2013), who conducted the study on Students' Readiness for e-learning: A Case Study of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand. This has been modified and categorized by the researcher to suit the requirements of the present study. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part gathered information about the participant's profile. The second part collected the participants' responses on the extent of students' preparedness for modular distance learning education. The third part gathered data on the challenges experienced by the participants while doing the modular distance learning education.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers asked for permission from the school head to conduct the research. Once the permission had been approved from the school head, the researcher conducted the data gathering by sending questionnaires using Google Forms on any social media platform to the participants' social media accounts. The letter of consent to the concerned participants for their indulgence in the conduct of the research was sent to their accounts. The researchers assured the participants that all data would be treated with confidentiality.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data ANOVA will be used in scrutinizing the significant difference in the extent of students' preparedness to modular distance learning education when grouped according to profile variables. Frequency, mean, and percentage were used in describing students' preparedness to modular distance learning education and the challenges encountered by them.

Result and Discussion

The Alfreda Albano National High School-Senior High adopted a modular distance learning modality as a key mover in continuing the education of its learners. The participants of the study have been identified through a z-score, which is composed of a 120-sample size, of which size came from the Grade 12 curriculum. Out of this 120-sample population size, 62 were identified as males and 58 were females. The following participants were asked to evaluate their preparedness for modular learning in terms of their study skills, motivation, and time management.

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Table 1. Extent of Students' Preparedness to Modular Learning in terms of Study Skills

Study skills	Mean	Adjectival Rating
I can follow a structured approach to find solutions to a problem	1.85	Not Prepared
I can express my thoughts and ideas in writing	2.16	Not Prepared
I am comfortable doing academic work independently and without regular face-to-face interaction with a teacher	2.25	Moderate
I can concentrate on my studies using the modular approach and take good notes about the topics I learned.	2.13	Not Prepared
I can read critically and understand what I read and make my own judgments about it.	2.22	Moderate
Overall	2.12	Not Prepared

It is clearly shown in Table 1 that students are not prepared for the kind of distance learning approach that they need to undergo in order to continue their education. According to the research of Thekeld and Brzoska (1994) and Valentine (2002), to be a successful student in this type of approach, one must have a number of characteristics such as tolerance for ambiguity, a need for autonomy, and the ability to be flexible. The data presents how students' preparedness and their study skills for the newly introduced modality can hamper their learning once readiness is not fully developed within themselves, as distance learning education aims to promote independent learning.

Table 2. Extent of Students' Preparedness to Modular Learning in terms of Motivation

Motivation	Mean	Adjectival Rating
I would be able to complete my study even when there are distractions	2.10	Not Prepared
I can set goals and objectives for learning	2.1	Not Prepared
I consider flexibility in time as an important motivating factor in taking modular distance learning	1.96	Not Prepared
I enjoy learning that is both interesting and challenging	2.13	Not Prepared
I can remain motivated even though the teacher is always not present.	2.13	Not Prepared
Overall	2.08	Not Prepared

Table 2 presents data about the participants' evaluated preparedness for modular learning in terms of their motivation. It can be deduced that students are not prepared to set their goals and objectives in this type of modality, which can affect their motivation to enjoy distance learning and complete all of the activities assigned to them. According to Valentine (2002), not all students are suited to this type of learning and not all subjects are best taught via this kind of medium. He emphasizes that mature students are the most likely to find success with distance learning. These participants are not prepared emotionally as distance learning education is new to them. As teachers are not around physically, that can boost their morale and prepare different

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activities to stimulate their motivation. Modular distance learning is quite a challenge, especially as the feeling of isolation can occur as independent learning is the main focus of this type of modality.

Table 3. Extent of Students' Preparedness to Modular Learning in terms of Time Management Skills

Time Management Skills	Mean	Adjectival Rating
I can schedule a time to provide timely responses to other teachers	Moderate	2.25
I can control my desire to postpone important tasks	Moderate	2.21
I can get assignments done ahead of time	Moderate	2.54
I can sacrifice personal time to complete assignments and reading	Moderate	2.32
I have the self-discipline to participate actively in modular learning	Not Prepared	1.94
Overall	Moderate	2.25

Table 3 shows how the participants perceived their preparedness for modular distance learning in terms of their time management skills. The data shows that students are moderately prepared to indulge their time in doing their modular distance learning. Hardy and Boaz (1997) and Valentine (2002) found that compared to most face-to-face learning environments, distance learning requires students to be more focused, better time managers, and able to work independently. The data shows that there is a lot of work to be done in order to teach self-discipline in terms of the time required to complete tasks productively in modular distance education.

Table 4. Significant difference in the Extent of Students' Preparedness to Modular Learning when Grouped According to Age

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*Df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	0.118180556	2	0.059090278	0.703304283	0.497027363	3.073762904
Within Groups	9.830115741	117	0.084018083			
Total	9.948296296	119				

Since the computed F value (0.703) is less than the critical value (3.073), we thus accept the null hypothesis at the 05 level of significance. Thus, there is no significant difference in the students' preparedness for modular learning when grouped according to their age. This indicates that age is not an influential factor in students' preparedness for modular distance learning.

Table 5. Significant difference in the Extent of Students' Preparedness to Modular Learning when Grouped According to Sex

	MALE	*FEMALE*
Mean	2.170967742	2.14137931
Known Variance	0.081	0.088
Observations	62	58
Hypothesized Mean	0	

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Difference	
Z	0.556817924
P(Z<=z) one-tail	0.288825918
z Critical one-tail	1.644853627
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.577651836
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985

The computed z value of 0.56 is less than the critical value of 1.96, so there is no significant difference in the students' preparedness for modular learning when grouped according to sex. This indicates that sex is not an influential factor in students' preparedness for modular distance learning.

Table 6. Significant difference in the Extent of Students' Preparedness to Modular Learning when Grouped According to Senior High School Track

	ACADEMIC	*TVL*
Mean	2.02037037	2.215079365
Known Variance	0.075	0.077
Observations	36	84
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-3.554883618	
P(Z<=z) one-tail	0.000189073	
z Critical one-tail	1.644853627	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.000378146	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

The computed z-value (-3.55) is less than the critical value (-1.96), so there is a significant difference in the extent of students' preparedness for modular learning when grouped according to their senior high school track. This indicates that subjects offered, skills, time, and motivation in the two different tracks may be influential to students' preparedness for modular learning.

Table 6. Challenges Encountered by the Participants in doing the Modular Distance Learning Education

Challenges	Rank
Difficulties in following directions from the learning modules	1
Unfavorable home learning environment	2
Feeling of isolation	3
Lack of enough time for study	4
Lack of support from family	5
Difficulty staying motivated	6
Difficulty in getting immediate feedback from the teachers	7

Table 6 shows the different challenges faced by the students in doing their modular distance education. The data presents how these challenges can influence their mental and emotional states, which can hamper their studies in the new normal of education. These identified challenges assist the researchers in developing an action plan that will benefit the entire academic community of the Alfreda Albano National High School-Senior High.

Conclusions

The researchers conclude that the disadvantages of modular distance learning education prevail more than its advantages. However, it's too early to evaluate whether the modular distance learning modality during the times of the pandemic was a failure. Dochy et al. (1989), Thekeld and Brzoska (1994), Hardy and Boaz (1997), and Valentine (2002) pointed out that characteristics like self-discipline, tolerance, being flexible, and maturity are important to succeed in this type of modality as independent learning is heavily focused on and not all students are suited to this type of modality. Thus, one's preparedness is influential and significant to the success of distance learning education.

Moreover, the researchers recommend that the identified challenges will be disseminated to a stakeholders' meeting to discuss matters in combating the issues and concerns of students undergoing modular distance learning. In addition, the crafting of the plan of action should be worked out together with the School Planning Team to give proper resources and allocation in the Annual Implementation Plan and School Improvement Plan of the school, which are also part of the School-Based Management which priority is to improve school and students' performances.

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