LEARNING MODULE DEVELOPMENT: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

[a]Jake Boy D. Carbonquillo

[b]Gina U. Españo

[ab]*Samar State University, Philippines*

[a]*jakeboy.carbonquillo@ssu.edu.ph*

[b]*gina.espano@ssu.edu.ph*

ABSTRACT

Tertiary education is the aspiration of more and more young people worldwide and a primary requirement for employment in various industries. Still, a sudden shift happened when the COVID-19 came in. Moreover, the recent problem brought by the pandemic made the whole educational system of the world change. With the growing problem, tertiary education has to divert its face-to-face instruction to a more suitable situation. In pursuing a continuative learning process, schools then used resources available to develop learning modules due to unstable internet connectivity. Therefore, the teachers need to look at the teachers' experiences in learning modules to see what other interventions might be effective. This qualitative study examines the lived experiences of teachers in tertiary education institutions in the Philippines. The Colaizzi strategy by Shosa (2012) analyzed the participants' narrative responses. It brought the themes that speak of the positive and negative experiences in adapting the modules for instruction, injecting creativity in making learning modules, new teacher activities using modules, and doing student-centered modules. After working with the themes of the narrative given by the participants, the researcher then concluded that the need for teacher training for the success of teaching in higher education is needed given the reality that the Philippines has been numbered as one of the countries whose internet connectivity is weak. Adapting flexible learning modalities through modules is a tool in making learning effective and considerate for both teacher and learner in this current pandemic. Re-tooling and enhancing the capacity of teachers in higher education will greatly help so that the modular instruction as means for teaching be that effective.

Keywords: Learning Modules, Flexible Learning, Higher Education Institutions, Lived Experiences of Teachers, and Modular Teaching

1. Introduction

The whole world has recently experienced the incredible devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic—one of the greatly affected sectors in all countries in the industry of education. The education industry, which delivers learning among constituents, is now challenged by the

Pandemic (Onyema, Eucheria, Obafemi, Sen, Atonye, & Sharma, 2020). Various schools, especially in higher education, were advised to cancel the face-to-face discussion that could be a way to infect students with those who have the virus. Schools have already established a Learning Management System and other platforms to cater to the needs of the present condition (Murphy, 2020).

Along the way of addressing the problem, there has recently been growing interest in developing learning modules for self-paced learning, essential and practical in the pandemic. As indicated in education principles, many shreds of evidence manifest that best learning occurs in learners when they do it by themselves, targeting a specific learning task and finding success in it (Burge, 2019). Learning Modules are believed to be tools that sequentially give course materials indicating the teacher's content and assessments (University of Florida, 2020). However, the purpose of doing a module would not end there. Once the learning modules are done, it is essential to understand the things inside the learning modules, especially those crafting them.

In the Philippines, both the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education made alternatives in addressing the pandemic events. The Department of Education made Sulong EduKalidad, which believed in moving forward together to prepare the future's educational system. They assured that every action would always consider the safety of the teachers and learners. They are now crafting a comprehensive Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) that addresses the time's challenges through the necessary adjustments in the curriculum to align with the learning materials and have relevant support to teachers and parents (Department of Education, 2020). On the other hand, the Commission on Higher Education released a series of advisories entitled 'Guidelines for the Prevention, Control, and Mitigation of the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)'. In advisory no. 7, the Commission highlighted the guidelines on how and what preparation universities and colleges should work upon the upcoming classes as to what and one highlight is the 'Adoption of a flexible learning strategy or mode in delivering instruction by ensuring appropriate (1) Facility Delivery System (2) Faculty Complement, and (3) Student Support.

Moreover, summer classes are only allowed to have online courses When CMO no. 4 s. 2020 was released, it becomes the guiding principle among Private and Public Universities and Colleges in implementing Flexible Learning. The said memorandum requires all HEIs to utilize all resources and technology to address learning in this pandemic. Moreover, it mentioned various modalities in implementing flexible learning and teaching, and one of the modalities mentioned in the offline modality. The offline modality mentioned is printed module and audiotapes, videotapes, C.D.s, storage devices, learning packets, television or radio broadcasting networks, and Portable Learning Management System. (Commission on Higher Education, 2020).

In their paper, Willmot and Perkin (2016) highlighted that the module writer was also a personal tutor. In their findings, these private tutors were finding it hard to formulate their modules, but after which, they found them compelling because the students now engaged with them. Furthermore, although the primary goal of developing a learning module was to have successful self-paced learning among learners in this pandemic, one can never deny those behind the development of learning modules. However, the following studies never addressed the issues of the challenges and the experiences encountered in the crafting of such learning modules. Few pieces of literature speak about these issues.

This research sought to explore teachers' lived experiences in higher education institutions in developing learning modules. Exploring their experiences is very important to know to address their concerns in making or developing learning modules.

2.   Methodology

This study is a qualitative research design employing an exploratory method since the study would explore teachers' experiences in higher education institutions.

The respondents of the study were the teachers coming from higher education institutions in the City of Catbalogan. There are three (3) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and there were five (5) representatives for each institution. Teachers from Higher Education mentioned they have the following qualifications: (1) Full-time Faculty; (2) at least five (5) years in service as higher education teacher; and (3) already have the experience of developing a learning module.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to carry out this research study. The researcher allowed the participants to elaborate and provide more flexibility, range, and, therefore, to elicit more information from the participants. The survey of O'keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović, and Sinha (2016) concluded that semi-structured interviews could easily and quickly facilitate. Moreover, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2018) explains that such kind of interview happens through observation, including the informal and unstructured interview, to have a clear understanding of the topic and the interest of developing questions that are significant and meaningful in a study.

In the data analysis, the researcher used Phenomenological data analysis by the Colaizzi strategy by Shosa (2012). Her paper presented the following steps to analyze the respondents' interviews. The phenomenological narrative given by the participants will undergo the following processes: First, there would be a reading of transcripts several times to gain a sense of the full content. Second, there would be taking notes of the respondents' significant statements from each transcript. Third, in this stage, there would be giving meanings to the significant statements. Fourth, after having an agreement toward all formulated meanings, grouping and acquired implications were taken from each category to reflect the themes' unique structure. Fifth, the themes were arranged into a detailed description at this analysis stage. Sixth, this step is similar to the previous step, but there would be no specific meanings. Seventh, this step aimed to validate the study findings using the checking technique.

Moreover, approval to conduct the study was granted by the Ethics Board and Research Committee of the University in which the study took place. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was assured.

3.   Results and Discussions

As the COVID-19 pandemic challenges in the education sector, schools and Universities in the Philippines make their strategy in addressing the various unexpected changes that should be adopted. The researcher then was able to have four (4) major themes with various sub-themes in each major theme. These themes are presented below:

3.1. Theme 1: Positive and Negative Experiences in Adapting the Use of Modules for Instruction

The reality of the pandemic is for teachers to adapt to the call of 21st-century teaching. Though this call has been advocated for a long time, some would not embrace it, given that various hindrances are beyond the control of schools and teachers. Various sub-themes have presented the positive and negative experiences that teachers have to adapt modules for instruction. Sub-themes are given below:

3.1.1. Unprepared Disposition for Modular Instruction.

The unprepared disposition for modular instruction is true to all educational institutions all over the world. This unprepared disposition was captured by the researcher among participants of the study. Participant 9 (L73-74), in her statement, mentioned that *"I still have some reservations because I am used to crafting modules that will serve as supplementary or partner the face-to-face discussion."* The unprepared experiences highlight the study made by Dejene (2019) when he mentioned that modularization had a significant impact on the school system. He added that instructors had the inadequacy of time and the universities' assessment policies that make them less committed and violated their professional ethics. Moreover, due to unexpected events, supplies to produce learning modules are insufficient. One of that was mentioned by Participant 10 (L771-772), *"No printers and inks, you must try to buy a personal printer to accommodate finished outputs."* Baysinger (2020), in the seventh consideration, underscored that there must be a consideration as to the believed other types of equipment and materials they used to deliver it properly. But despite this, there there were veteran and newbies in the adaptation of the learning modules. Participant 15 (L170-171) expressed that, *"Module is not a stranger to me because being experienced, with my age experience in teaching."* This concern was highlighted in the study of Nardo (2017) added that integrating learning modules in the classroom was not new because other countries had embedded them in their school system for a long time. Rufii (2015) also agreed this claim highlighted a significant shift of emphasis that happened, which is from teaching to education.

3.1.2. Benefits of the Modules.

Aside from the unprepared experience, teachers in higher education institutions have seen the benefits of the modules though there are existing challenges. They highlighted that this compressed the teacher's work in a semester as mentioned by Participant 4 (L540-542), *"It compresses the work of teachers that you have to finish the whole module for the prelims then followed by the midterm module,"* another is it alleviates the pressure and burdens as said by Participant 7 (L573-574), *"I realized that having modules is helpful and could alleviate some of the pressure and burden of the instructor"*; they gained personal benefits expressed by Participant 7 (L554-555), *"I have gained in the process of developing my learning modules"* and was seconded by Participant 8, *"I can share lessons with my students through the learning modules and at the same time learn from the lessons given*, especially updating their professional growth emphasized by Participant 10 (L282-283), *"I have felt the need to continue education and sway the academic freeze away."*; and resourceful in gathering references as highlighted by Participant 15, *"The module helps me to search more because the book is limited, the module is not.*" Various researchers and article writers supported the various benefits that they have mentioned. The article entitled Learning Module (2020) mentioned that learning modules are defined as an organized collection of the content presented together and

can support a given course's full range. The things done in a semester can be done and put into one learning module because they can design it as what appears in the syllabus, added by the article. Their experiences of becoming resourceful in developing a learning module capture the ideas presented by Kalanzis and Cope (2020) when they mentioned that the teacher resource site included links to the purpose of particular activities, links to standards, and teaching tips. They also added that the teacher could share plans with colleagues, the school division members, or a professional grouping extending beyond the school's learning modules.

3.2. Theme 2: Experiences in Injecting Creativity in Making Learning Modules

As higher education in the Philippines continually answer the call of 21st-century teaching. Teachers make sure that the module will never be that far from the experiences learners have in the classroom. Along their way of doing the modules, the researcher could capture their experiences in doing modules to make effective teaching using this learning material acknowledged by the Commission on Higher Education. Various sub-themes have presented their experiences in the creative development of the learning modules. Sub-themes are presented below:

3.2.1. Limited Features of the Module.

Along the way of their development of the learning modules, there were identified limitations such as the things that would and could happen in the classroom, skill subject's delivery, mastery of a teacher in terms of subject matter, and the students' interpretations of a lesson. Participant 14 (L162-163), *"In teaching face-to-face, you can say something, you can ask something even the facial expression of the teacher wherein we cannot do it in the module."* This statement was also seconded by Participant 14 (L358-360), *"Although there are drawbacks because like let's say, for example, we are teaching skilled subject, like my baking class this semester that even up to now I'm still trying to figure out how I'm going to deliver or how I'm going to teach the students one by one."* The observation made by the participants were also seen in various researchers; Baysinger (2020) cited specific considerations to be made regarding the exact outline and dividing the topics into the modules. Even if it covers the syllabus's entire content as defined by the article Learning Module (2020), added that clear outline that would not cover the classroom's usual things. On the aspect of skilled subject delivery, it would not be carried in the learning module; this was mentioned by Nadas and Vidal (2020) when they saw the disadvantage of modules. Moreover, there is a danger of destruction and inconsistency to the learning programs because of the curriculum's delivery method and assessment practices. Fox (2020) also agree when she said that one of the disadvantages was the lack of practical knowledge, which is very important in a specific program. This lack of skills integration in the module might worsen a learner's performance or even the program, as mentioned in the study. The limitation on the aspect of teacher's mastery of the subject matter was identified as one of the disadvantages in the same research when they said that deadlines of units could limit a teacher's ability to teach essential topics in the ways that the teacher would choose. These activities and content of the module determined the mastery of the teacher in the subject matter. Also, Baysinger (2020) mentioned it when he said it was hard to maintain (mastery of subject matter) significantly when the content is changing rapidly. This seen limitation hinders the faculty from coming up with useful learning modules.

3.2.2. Creative ways on Module Development.

As Teachers in higher education institutions see the modules' problem as to the content of the module, various strategies are being used by higher education faculty to have effective teaching. For example, Participant 15 (L375-376), *"I give the modules more information about the topic, and I found out new technologies that I only hear from each teacher."*; they could be modified from what is significant and not. The guidelines provided or seen by teachers helped the development of learning modules easier; this was captured in the statement of Participant 9 (L445-448), *"Guidelines are good because it organizes and streamlines the process. It also gives an idea as to how the topic may be approached or developed by the teacher.*

On the other hand, guidelines that are not well-crafted more were haphazardly done could do more harm than good." The creativity made by the teacher in searching guidelines was supported in the study of Kalanzis and Cope (2020) study when they emphasized the teacher's role as a learning designer rather than just a curriculum implementer and a channel of syllabus and textbook.

Moreover, these revisions that make them creative make sense with what Burge (2019) mentioned about the three (3) key things to think about when designing a learning module. The second key highlight is that the module is constructively aligned to actively construct their understanding and alignment with the teaching and assessment with the intended learning outcomes. That is why teachers must be creative in their module development.

3.3. Theme 3: Experiences of the New Normal Teachers' Activities

With these sudden changes, teachers in higher education have to adapt to various changes in their teaching activities. This major theme was captured in the responses of the participants of the study. Various sub-theme in support of the major theme is enumerated below:

3.3.1. Observable Changes in Teacher and Student Activities.

Changes in activities of both faculty and learner are immanent among the experience of the faculty participants. Participant 12 (L315-316), *"The preparation before every class because it would be different if the students will be reading. Things like that make it a big help and relief for us in preparing before class and feeling nervous before you face the class."* On the other hand, the statement the otherhand is in opposition with what Yildiz and Tatik (2019) highlighted that the classroom environment plays a significant role in ensuring students' participation and success in the classroom. Moreover, they highlighted that the teacher could make changes in the classroom set-up for conducive learning, and students, on the other hand, could help the teacher and contribute to this process. The study of Yildiz and Tatik (2019) gives the regular class's idea to make students participate in learning. But with the new setup of education, the teachers have to do the same with the module so that they would be that participative in the learning modules. Moreover, another change was highlighted by Participant 12 (L801-803), *"The checking part, it is time-consuming because I have to copy the answer and then I have to search in Google to see if how many percent did, they copied from the source."* This observation is accurate as Murry (2020) mentioned that the pandemic caused the changes in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. One of the concerned activities is checking the student's activities—making sure that it is not a copy-paste work that has been observed. Also,

Participant 3 mentioned*, "The interest depends on the students' time of management because of the many assessments (L679)."* The observation of the change in interest was observed by Baysinger (2020) when it was mentioned that it was impossible to ask the instructor questions or learn from others' questions about learning the same topic. This same disadvantage was the teachers' problem; they do not know if students are learning or have met the standard. The same was accurate with the study of Tedla and Desta (2015), highlighting the students' poor performance caused by the modules.

3.3.2. Observable Change of Experiences in Time Schedule of Teachers.

Changes in the teacher's activity also include the schedule that they are rendering and using. For example, Participant 13 (L 122-125) mentions that *"There is no more time to balance between the distribution of the modules to students and the monitoring part."* The same observation was raised by Participant 15 (L 177-178), *"The problem encountered also is the time frame because not in comparing there is also a difference in the house and the classroom."* Baysinger (2020) supported their observation and experiences when she identified that it frequently took novices to learn via tutorial than via classroom. The same findings were also seconded by Nadas and Vidal's (2020) study when they mentioned that one of the disadvantages of the learning module was that it affected the teacher's ability to submit on the deadlines of the unit and cover the essential topics of the whole course. They also added that there was an overlapping achievement of short and long-term goals.

3.4. Theme 4: Experiences of Making a Student-centered Learning Module

Teachers in higher education institutions do a creative learning module for effective learning among students. Moreover, in the development, the theme of making the learning module a student-centered one is captured in treating the participants' phenomenological narrative. Various sub-themes in support of the major theme is showed below:

3.4.1. Enriching the Content of Learning in the Module.

One of the seen techniques that would make a module firm support in the learning among students is to enrich the content in the learning module. Moreover, Participant 1 (L653-655) mentions that *"In my part, I would monitor them by giving them supplemental activities as a secondary attack for the module."* Shelton (2016) suggests that using various methods meets the needs of different learning styles, which has been the techniques of other teachers to make their module a student-centered one. Also, Kalantzis and Cope (2020) advise that the teacher's task in the learning module development is to commit their learning design to the digital record and make the learning module of great local relevance.

3.4.2. Creating a Student-Friendly Module.

In enriching the content inside the learning module, it is important to let students feel that they are still in the classroom and how they are being considered during the pandemic. Participant 1 mentions that *"You already have the standards, but you are still willing to enrich it to make the learning process more effective even if it is a modular approach of learning.* (L 392-394)." Also, Participant 3 added that *"Although you have already formulated your guidelines in developing your learning modules, still you need to adjust to assist the students in meeting the standards*

(L402-405)." Their sentiments were seen in the study of Nadas and Vidal (2020) agree with the teachers' style in making the module a student-friendly module. According to them, students could unitize an approach that makes it easier for them to stay on track with their studies and effectively manage their time.

Moreover, according to them, this kind of style of module development enables students to plan their lessons. But, on the other hand, teachers make a follow-up with the students through social media. Also, according to the study of Nardo (2017), teachers become enthusiastic by monitoring students' activities, which was more purposeful, especially with students who need more guidance and attention.

4.   Conclusion

Based on the results of data processing and data analysis, teacher training for the success of teaching in higher education is needed given the reality that the Philippines has been numbered as one of the countries whose internet connectivity is weak. Adapting flexible learning modalities through modules is a tool in making learning effective and considerate for both teacher and learner in this current pandemic. Re-tooling and enhancing the capacity of teachers in higher education will greatly help so that the modular instruction as means for teaching be that effective.

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