

Lived Experiences of Administrators in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning

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Abstract:- School administrators are considered the most influential person in the school. This study determined the lived experiences of school administrators in the implementation of modular distance learning. This study utilized phenomenological design and transcendental phenomenology. This study was conducted in elementary schools from district one to ten of the Division of Ozamiz City. The researcher collected the data from the school administrators of Division of Ozamiz City. There were 30 participants in the study. The participants were identified and selected through purposive sampling. A researcher-made interview guide was the research instrument used in the study. This study used Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology of data analysis using NVivo software where codes and categories were extracted to form themes. Findings revealed the following themes: *implementing the health safety protocols properly in the school, coordinating with the local government and other stakeholders on the activities in school, providing resources for the modular distance learning, monitoring the teachers in the implementation of MDL, and committing work for public service.* The school administrators had experiences during the implementation of the modular distance learning. They were able to collaborate with teachers to assist their children in their lessons as well as give them parental advises. Full supports were given to schools from the division office as well as from the internal and external stakeholders during the implementation of the modular distance learning. The school heads continue with their additional preparations for the modular distance learning and establish linkage with the local government unit to ensure safety of all the teachers and staff in the school. Be the role model in the implementation of MDL, and provide learning resources that support the MDL preparations.

Keywords:- Leadership Skills, Modular Learning, Parental Involvement, School Administrator, Stakeholders.

I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought simple and complex problems and problems characterized by the surprising emergence of inconsistent, unpredictable, and uncertain events (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2020). The pandemic affected the education sector. The global lockdown culminated in a lockdown of educational institutions as the situation worsened. This closure of schools, colleges, and

universities created a stressful situation for educational administration, leaving them with few options (Khalil et al., 2020). Various problems have included the provision of school infrastructure such as an Internet network, which previously did not exist in all schools, particularly in villages, as well as the cost of purchasing an expensive data package (Aliyyah et al., 2020).

A study was conducted to investigate the challenges facing Open and Distance Learning students at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). The results showed that ODL learners were challenged with a range of obstacles in their course of studies. The most reported challenges were lack of sufficient time for study, difficulties in access and use of ICT, ineffective feedback, and lack of study materials (Musingafi et al., 2015). In addition, Chinese college students tend to have ambiguous future career goals, lack active academic involvement, and spend more time in-class study compared with out-class study according to their study time (Bao, 2020).

In Sparta, research was conducted to determine the knowledge and views of students about distance education in the pandemic process. According to the results of this research, it was determined that the participants' opportunities as having computers and the internet affect their views on distance learning (İnce et al., 2020). There was disagreement about what to teach, how to teach, teacher and student workloads, the teaching environment, and the implications for educational equity. The policy faced difficulties due to the following factors: the weakness of the online teaching infrastructure, teacher inexperience, and the information gap, the complex environment at home, and so on (Zhang et al., 2020).

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, the educators, students, and the school are still coping and adjusting to distance learning education. The COVID19 affects the education sector (Alea et al., 2020). Phenomenological research explored the lived experiences of secondary teachers in the pre-implementation of distance learning in the new normal. Teachers make the necessary preparations to be prepared for distance learning. Despite the challenges, they continued their tasks by adjusting to the new normal. To effectively facilitate the delivery of quality education, higher offices and school authorities should collaborate with teachers before implementing distance learning to address their needs and provide training (De Villa

& Manalo, 2020). Inadequate instructor training for new normal education; insufficient time for the preparation of modules, exams, and other related to instruction were due to the administrators' or concerned authorities' limited time to conduct. Due to the teachers' lack of physical contact, students had difficulty comprehending some activities (Cacayan et al., 2020).

In a phenomenological study, teachers were HOPEFUL: hardworking and dedicated; optimistic amidst uncertainty; problematic yet reflective; evenhandedness in responsibilities; frightened but ready; undisturbed desire to reach; and life-long learner. Despite the uncertainties, the experiences are described in their response to the mission of shaping today's generation toward undisturbed education (Lansangan & Gonzales, 2020). Another study was conducted to explore the reflection of teachers using a narrative research approach. The study explored how teachers view reality despite this pandemic. Narrative researchers gather stories and compose experiential narratives that will give a view of learners, teachers, and the country as a whole. The results of the study were summarized by the acronym "BRIGHT." Build resilience to overcome the challenge of new normal; Resourcefulness in time of pandemic; Innovate to produce interactive and effective instructions; Goal-oriented; Hone skills in various teacher preparations that will show flexibility and authenticity; and Technology-assisted learning environment through the use of social media (de Vera, n.d).

Briones (2020) emphasized that the basic education learning continuity plan during COVID-19 is the department's response to the educational challenges posed by COVID-19. She emphasized the importance of continuing education in the face of current and future challenges and difficulties. As a result, the LCP is a Department-wide output. Hence, this study explored the lived experiences of school administrators in the implementation of modular distance learning in the Division of Ozamiz City.

II. METHODS

➤ Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach, transcendental phenomenological research design. The phenomenological design assumes that human experience is mediated through interpretation (Creswell, 2009); consequently, the core of the phenomenological approach is the interest in other people's experiences and the meaning they make of those experiences (Seidman, 1998). The design was deemed appropriate in this study as it explored the lived experiences of school administrators in the implementation of modular distance learning.

Ozamiz City is nestled fronting the rich Pangasinan Bay in Northwestern Mindanao with an estimated land area of 16,407 hectares. Behind it stands the 7,956 feet Malindang Mountain. It is bounded on the north by the Mindanao Sea; on the east by Iligan Bay and Pangasinan Bay which separate it from its twin city of Cagayan de Oro; on the south by the City of Tuguegarao; and the Municipality of Don Victoriano on

the west; Like many of the towns and cities of Misamis Occidental, it is straddled along the coast of Pangasinan Bay partly because of its extremely rugged terrain of the interior and its commercial activities which center around the coastal areas (Ozamiz City Profile).

The study was conducted in the thirty (30) elementary schools from district one (1) to district ten (10) in the division of Ozamiz City.

The participants were the school administrators of the thirty (30) elementary schools of the Division of Ozamiz City. They were chosen through purposive sampling. The selection of the participants were based on the following criteria: 1.) handling a school for at least three years; 2.) involved in the preparations for the implementation of modular distance learning; 3.) were willing to participate in the study. Before the interview was conducted, the researcher ensured that all those criteria were met.

The researcher utilized the researcher-made interview guide in eliciting data from the participants using the structured interview guide. The interview guide, approved by the dissertation committee, was included in the opening question, core questions, and exit questions.

In gathering the data, permission was obtained from the Misamis University Graduate School office and the Division of Ozamiz City to conduct the research. Upon the approval of the letter request, a researcher-made structured interview guide was used to obtain the data from the participants' lived experiences in implementing modular distance learning. The researcher interviewed the participants on the agreed schedule. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of the data and explained that they might withdraw anytime within the conduct of the study.

The participants were asked to fill out an informed consent form. After identifying the final set of participants, the interviews were scheduled and digitally recorded, in which transcription followed. A face-to-face interview was used to clarify questions. In the conduct of the face-to-face interview, the researcher ensured that safety measures and protocols set by the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) were followed. The researcher took down notes during the interview, and a digital recorder was used for the researcher to review what transpired during the interview.

The interview started by identifying the participants and reviewing the purpose of the interview. The participants were asked to review the drafts of the written report of the study for additional feedback to establish accuracy.

Participants in the study were not harmed in any way. Respect for their dignity was prioritized. Then, full consent from the participants was obtained before the study. The protection of research participants' privacy, an adequate level of confidentiality of the research data, and their individual and organizations' anonymity were ensured—any form of communication in relation to the study was done with honesty and transparency. Lastly, any deception or

exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research were avoided.

This study used Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology of data analysis using NVivo software where codes and categories were extracted. The following are the steps in the phenomenological reduction which served as a guide in analyzing the data gathered: (1) Bracketing, (2) Horizontalization, (3) Clustering into Themes, (4) Textural Description, (5) Structural Description, and (6) Textural-Structural Synthesis.

Bracketing is an approach used to mitigate the effects of preconceived notions and perceptions to be held before the study will start. It is a process of suspending judgments and biases, or 'epoche.' Consequently, it reaches a deep level of inquiry from the topic and population selection, interview design, collection and interpretation, and dissemination of research findings.

Horizontalization is technically referring to the listing of all the verbatim expressions that have bearing in the study. Initially, each statement was looked into with equal value. Then, statements which are found irrelevant, repetitive, overlapping, and outside the scope of the study were ignored. Horizons, which are the remaining sections after the data has been polished, are considered the constituent and significant parts of the phenomenon.

Clustering is the third step in obtaining inferences from the study. It involves reducing experiences to invariant horizons, creating core themes, and validating invariant horizons using multiple data sources. To validate the invariant horizons obtained from the study, findings of research studies were reviewed using methods other than the data-gathering methods being used in the study like observation, field note-taking, and related literature. This validation process is crucial to the accuracy and clarity of the representations.

Textural description, or 'what occurred,' refers to an account that describes the perception of the phenomenon. In obtaining the textual description of the participants' experience, verbatim excerpts in the interview were used, and a narration of the meaning units derived from the themes was provided.

Structural description, or how it occurred', is the integration of imaginative variation, an ingenious outlook, and insights to the textural description. An imaginative variation is considered as the mental experiment on analyzing the details and structures of the participants' experiences by being detached from natural inclination through *epoche*. It is appended in each paragraph of textural descriptions to generate a structural description.

In the *textural-structural synthesis* process, the meaning units of each of the participants were collated, and a composite of textural and structural descriptions that are common to them was developed. A narrative or synthesis represents all of the participants written in a third-person

perspective. The primary goal of this final step of Moustakas' method is to obtain the essence of the experience of the phenomenon.

III. FINDINGS

This study involved thirty school heads whose average is age 46 years old. Twenty females or six percent and ten males or 33% constituted the participants of this study. They were serving the school for at least 7-8 years as school heads. They occupied the roles of school administrators. This study yielded the following themes: implementing the health safety protocols properly in the school, coordinating with the local government and other stakeholders on the activities in school, providing resources for the modular distance learning, monitoring the teachers in the implementation of MDL, and committing work for public service.

➤ Properly the Health Safety Protocols in the School

As the schools adapt the Modular Distance Learning (MDL), school administrators properly implemented the health safety protocols from planning down to the implementation of MDL. They included the protocols in their paaralan sa tahanan (school at home) webinar. They acted as a role model so that everyone would follow and observe the safety measures in the prevention of COVID 19. They even conducted dry runs to ensure that teachers and parents would follow the guidelines set by the DepEd and IATF. The following participants articulated these:

- *Health and safety protocols were discussed during the Paaralan sa Tahanan seminar (P7).*
- *Ensuring health protocols will be observed during the implementation of modular distance learning as it is a mandate everyone must follow and implement. (P1)*
- *As a school head, I need to be a role model to my teachers, following health protocols. (P9).*
- *School conducted dry runs in the implementation of modular distance learning. (P14)*
- *They also set the goal and objectives by following the guidelines and memorandum. P14*
- *We conducted series of Parents' Orientation & Dry -run for them to have an idea of the MDL implementation. (P17)*

To avoid direct contact with the teachers and parents, the school heads conducted webinars to ensure the participants' safety. Most of the activities related to the implementation of the MDL were done through webinars, not face to face.

- *The Orientation through webinars was conducted in preparation for the implementation of modular distance learning. (P10)*
- *Webinars for teachers on how to do modules for the MDL modality were done to help teachers perform well in implementing modular distance learning. (P5)*
- *Orientation through webinars was conducted in preparation for the implementation of modular distance learning. (P10)*

COVID-19 pandemic caused a massive impact on schools. The country immediately opted for online learning. The integration of safety and health protocols should be accessible to all schools (Türkoglu, 2019). This is to adapt to the world's issues, thereby raising awareness and improving positive attitudes among students (Amin, Mahadi, Ibrahim, Yaacob, & Nasir, 2012; Türkoglu, 2019), strengthening educational health practices, and implementing effective environmental education policies.

A school administrator plays a vital role in the implementation of health and safety protocols in the school. Series of orientation conducted through paaralan sa tahanan helps inform the parents and other stakeholders always to observe social distancing and other safety measures set by the school in the implementation of modular distance learning. Teachers followed the guidelines set by the DepEd and IATF with the constant monitoring of the school administrators.

➤ *Coordinating With the Local Government and Other Stakeholders on the Activities in School*

In the planning and implementation of MDL, the school heads had many experiences just to carry out the outcomes of the new learning modality. They tapped the LGU officials during the planning as to the kind of modality to be used in the schools. Moreover, they also surveyed parents identifying the right modality for their children. After which, they conducted an information drive to inform the parents and learners of the modality used. Series of webinars to capacitate the teachers as they faced the new normal in delivering education to the learners were also conducted.

- *The school head informs the Brgy. captain about the activities to be done by the school to continue the delivery of education to the children. (P1)*
- *The school invites the Brgy captain and EDCOM chair of the Brgy during the orientation of MDL. (P18)*
- *Information drive to internal and external stakeholders was conducted. (P4)*
- *During the implementation of MDL, the Brgy. The captain was supportive helpful. (P3)*
- *Keep updated, identifying the right modality through a survey using the LESF where the parents choose the modality suited or applicable for their children - capacitate the teachers to become effective in their field, undergone training and seminars through webinars to be more equipped in delivering better education, trained teachers not just for professional growth but to become ready for unexpected circumstances. (P16)*

During the implementation of MDL, school heads also experienced asking assistance from the people around them, like stakeholders. They realized the importance of unity and camaraderie in the pandemic as they both help each other deliver quality education. They learned to prioritize things and consider the welfare of the children first before others.

- *As a school head, it is very important to understand our work and know the importance of the people around you, especially the stakeholders. (P12)*
- *As a school administrator, I've learned to be more thankful to the stakeholders. After all, they play a vital*

role in implementing MDL because they serve as teachers to their children. (P10)

- *As a school administrator, I've realized the importance of having a good relationship with the community. I need to be adaptable to change and am willing to work with love and compassion. (P12)*
- *As a school head, it is very important to understand our work and know the importance of the people around you, especially the stakeholders. (P13)*
- *For this time of the pandemic, I've learned to become wiser in making a decision. As school heads, our priority is our learners, teachers, and community and not ourselves. (P2)*
- *Communicate the parents of our learners to inform them of the new normal process even though pandemic education must continue (P11)*

Despite the pressures they faced in their roles, principals have demonstrated selflessly and solidly that their communities can depend on them (Henebery, 2020). School heads' roles become increasingly involved in the face of the dynamic tension between internal goals and external reform demands (Sherry Ganon-Shilon & Chen Schechter (2019), and they always have to deal with their work demands inside and outside the school (Hoque & Kamaluddin, 2014).

School heads are confronted with various issues as they provide leadership and organization to their schools. Internal and external stakeholders are partners of the school administrators in the activities of the school. Constant communication with the parents and other stakeholders is one way of coordinating them. Through this partnership, the improvement of the school is evident.

➤ *Providing Resources for The Modular Distance Learning*

School heads were provided funds from the division office for the resources needed to implement modular distance learning. Maximizing the budget allocation in purchasing the materials needed like bond papers, inks, printers, etc. were done by the school administrators. It was evident that full support was given to the teachers regarding the resources needed to deliver education despite the pandemic. The following participants mentioned these.

- *Provided funds in purchasing health materials and linkage to LGU for the RISO machine for central schools and private sector through the Division office in providing bond papers to school and other supplies. (P30)*
- *Budget allocation is part of the preparation as well as the health and safety protocols. (P11)*
- *The additional budget was given to schools in support of the printing of modules. (P2)*
- *Full support was given to teachers by giving them printers, inks, bond papers, and soft copies of modules for reproduction. (P8)*
- *It is also important to give full support to teachers through giving them the resources needed like bond papers, printers, ink, and other materials. (P1)*
- *Downloaded funds for the reproduction of SLMs from 1st to 4th quarter. (P12)*

The school heads managed well the available resources in the community to carry out new normal education. Participant 20 claimed it. *“School heads see to it that teachers have the needed gadgets in order to fully implement the MDL. We prepared to the extent of resources we have. Manage to maximize the capacity of our intellect in dealing with this new normal set up.” (P20).*

During the implementation of modular distance learning in schools, it is important to address the needs of the teachers, most especially the resources needed in the reproduction of self-learning modules. Full support to the needed resources helped a lot, especially in implementing modular distance learning in school.

- *School heads see to it that teachers have the needed gadgets to implement the MDL fully. We prepared to the extent of resources we have. Manage to maximize the capacity of our intellect in dealing with this new normal setup. (P20)*
- *The school shouldered repair of the printers. School heads help teachers delivered the modules through tapping barangay people and other stakeholders. (P6)*
- *Addressed the needs of the teachers and allocated a budget for the resources needed repairs. The school shouldered repair of the gadgets used in the implementation of MDL. (P14)*

Generally, the School head is in charge of the school heads' overall operation responsibility to prepare the school budget, a record of projected revenue and expenditure. Most schools use to manage their finances using accounting systems affected by school activities and financial management (Petrick, 2020). As administrators, managers were responsible for financial activities and maintenance of buildings. Moreover, a school principal determines to what extent these parties are accountable for the financial school management. Principals continue to be responsible for their schools' management even though their primary responsibility has shifted (Mestry, 2004).

School heads are responsible for managing the school. It is then their role to ensure that the teachers' needs were complied with and addressed during modular distance learning. School leaders' supports towards teachers and learners were important in the delivery of the teaching-learning process.

➤ *Monitoring the Teachers in the Implementation of MDL*

In implementing modular distance learning, school administrators conducted constant monitoring on the reproduction of self-learning modules to ensure the delivery of quality education. It was also part of the school heads' daily tasks to check and assess the teachers' performance. Constant communication is one of the best strategies to monitor the teachers in implementing modular distance learning. The following participants mentioned these.

- *Checking and assessing teachers' output and monitor the effectiveness by conducting monitoring and constant follow-ups. It is also a way of improving the teacher's teaching performance to feel loved and cared for. (P20)*

- *Checking and assessing teachers' output and monitor the effectiveness by conducting monitoring and constant follow-ups. (P2)*
- *Constant monitoring of printing of the modules was done by the division (P7)*
- *Constant communication to teachers regarding their roles as print liners the school heads emphasized print liners during orientation. (P11)*

As a school head, it is also important to give teachers technical assistance to solve work-related problems. School administrators also listened to teachers' suggestions and ideas towards work. Encouraging teachers to work through congratulating and praising them adds the teachers' motivation to work. School heads are confronted with various issues as they provide leadership and organization to their schools.

- *Congratulates teachers for their performances. Help teachers solve work-related problems. Addressed the needs of the teachers and allocated a budget for the resources needed.. (P10)*
- *Encourage teachers and praise them for a job well done as printers. School heads praise the teachers for their performances. Teacher writers were given certificates from the RO signed by the Regional Director. (P12)*
- *Listen to the work related-problems of teachers and give solutions to them. Provide seminars that would help boost the interests of teachers to work, like mental awareness seminar through google meet or zoom. (P4)*
- *Provide the teachers with the resources needed to implement MDL effectively. Training and seminars were given to teachers. Mental activities were provided to teachers, as well as spiritual and physical activities. (P15)*

School administrators face different roles in handling a school; constant monitoring is one (Holden, 2019, Wise, 2015). Teacher motivation at work is primarily determined by effective management. When systems and structures are in place to manage and support teachers, they become professionally responsible and committed. School administrators' management is most crucial at the school level. The importance of teachers' work and their competence in performing are crucially influenced by internal and external supervision (Mark, 2015).

A school's principal is like the middle of a wheel. The principal keeps things in good order and inline. It is good to note that school leaders should have constant monitoring of teachers' outputs in implementing modular distance learning. School heads' should give technical assistance to teachers to improve their performance. Teachers perform better when guided by the school head. It is then important to school leaders to be more attentive and observant to teachers' work-related needs.

➤ *Committing Work for Public Service*

School heads are confronted with various work requirements in school with deadlines. Working with compassion is very important as they are held accountable for all the activities done in the school. Communication to

stakeholders also helps the school administrators to adopt change. School administrators are willing to work with love and compassion.

- *Commitment towards work is an important value as a public servant. It is a challenging time, and as school administrators, we need to work hard to meet the demands of this new normal. (P5)*
- *As a school administrator, I've realized the importance of having a good relationship with the community. I need to be adaptable to change and am willing to work with love and compassion. (P12)*

A school principal's work combines elements of teaching with some administrative tasks (Neuvoo, 2017). Dedication and experience are important factors to become a practical school head. Tasks go far beyond imposing corrective measures for student activities that are problematic. School heads are called upon to influence certain fields of education and direct them. Stress has enormous negative implications for schools, especially on the individual/school head (Moran, 2014).

School administrator's love for work is inevitable. School leaders' willingness to work beyond office hours is often done by the school heads to meet the deadlines. School administrators should know how to manage their time. Constant communication, including the community, about the activities conducted in schools, is deemed important.

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- *Health and safety protocols were discussed during the paaralan sa tahanan seminar(P7).*
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To avoid direct contact with the teachers, and parents, the school heads conducted webinars just to ensure the safety of the participants. Most of the activities related to the implementation of the MDL were done through webinar, not face to face.

- *Orientation through webinars were conducted in preparation for the implementation of modular distance learning. (P10)*
- *Webinars for teachers on how to make modules for MDL modality was done to help teachers perform well in the implementation of modular distance learning. (P5)*
- *Orientation through webinars were conducted in preparation for the implementation of modular distance learning. (P10)*

In the Philippines, due to the 4, 195 confirmed cases as of April 10, 2020 based on the Department of Health (DOH, 2020) online tracker report, the COVID-19 pandemic really causes a massive impact in schools. The country immediately opted for online learning. The integration of safety and health protocols should be accessible to all students in the schools (Türkoglu, 2019). This is to adapt to the real issues that the world is dealing with and thereby create awareness and improve positive attitudes among the students (Amin et al., 2012; Türkoglu, 2019), strengthen educational health practices, and implement effective environmental education policies.

A school administrator plays vital roles in the implementation of health and safety protocols in the school. Series of orientation conducted through *paaralan sa tahanan* helps a lot in informing the parents and other stakeholders to always observe social distancing and other safety measures set by the school in the implementation of modular distance learning. Teachers followed the guidelines set by the DepEd and IATF with the constant monitoring of the school administrators.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The school heads have varied experiences in the implementation of modular distance learning. In the school, they have to ensure that the health and safety protocols are properly observed and implemented. They need to coordinate with the local government and other stakeholders like the parents for all the activities in the school, so that everyone will be protected. Information about how the modules will be distributed to the pupils have to be disseminated to the parents, hence orientations on parents have to be conducted. Moreover, school heads have to be resourceful in providing resources for modular distance learning as a support to the teachers who have been preparing for the modules. In addition, school heads have to also monitor the implementation of modular distance learning to both the teachers and students. It is needed that school heads have to be committed to their work in order to get a better impact.

From the findings and conclusions given, it is recommended that the school heads continue with their additional preparations for the modular distance learning and establish linkage with the local government unit to ensure safety of all the teachers and staff in the school. Be the role model in the implementation of MDL, and provide learning resources that support the MDL preparations. School heads may also enhance further their system of monitoring and

evaluation of the implementation of MDL. Teachers also ensure that parents follow the school health safety protocols as they enter the school during distribution and retrieval of the modules. Future researches may also conduct the same study that would look into the other challenges encountered by other members of the faculty in implementing MDL.

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