

Utilization of Distance Learning Modular Approach in Pangasinan State University – Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (PSU-ETEEAP)

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Abstract – This research paper was conducted to determine the utilization and effectiveness distance learning modular approach in Pangasinan State University – Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (PSU-ETEEAP). In this study, a mixed-method research design was used. A stratified random sampling technique was used to determine the respondents. Fifty (50) ETEEAP students from different deputized programs of PSU served as respondents to the study. The survey questionnaire was utilized as the data gathering instrument, validated by experts to ensure its validity. Online interview was also conducted as another tool for gathering data. Salient findings revealed that the modular distance learning approach utilized in PSU ETEEAP is highly effective. Still, there are also problems encountered by students on the modular approach that needs to be addressed, such as the module contents, format, etc.

Keywords – modular approach, ETEEAP learning modality, distance learning

INTRODUCTION

The ETEEAP is a comprehensive tertiary educational assessment program that acknowledges, accredits, and assigns equivalencies to knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values obtained via appropriate employment. It is carried out by deputized higher education institutions responsible for awarding the necessary college degree. (Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation (ETEEAP) - CHED, n.d.).

CMO 54 s, 2016 Article IV (Standards of Practice for Deputized Higher Education Institution item number one (Accessibility and Respect of Clientele) states that the ETEEAP services must be accessible to Filipinos regardless of their places of residence, cultural or demographic characteristics, faith, ethnic origin and/or socio-economic circumstances. The program shall be sensitive to and respectful of the different interest, cultural traits and value orientations of its clientele. It is along this premise that the modular distance learning approach (MDLA) is being utilized in the institutions to frequently respond to the given mandate as a deputized institution.

Pangasinan State University (PSU) is one of the Higher Education Institutions in the

country which deputized to offer ETEEAP. Among the deputized programs include Education, Agriculture, Industrial Technology, and Fisheries. The said programs are at least with Level III accreditation.

One of the unique characteristics of ETEEAP is its learning modality which is a modular approach. According to Dejene and Chen (2019), The modular approach is a new educational thought trend that transforms traditional methods of instruction into an outcome-based learning paradigm. The modular form of education gives students more control over their learning and takes more responsibility for learning. It necessitates higher maturity on the side of the learner, and the courses are better suited to more mature pupils. All of the capabilities necessary to execute are tightly connected in a modular way. Task sets are grouped. For example, the skills necessary to manage an institution's finances, such as financial creation, allocation, accounting, and monitoring, may be bundled together and create a module called financial management.

With the increasing demand for effective learning modalities in the new normal brought about by the pandemic, the researcher would like to delve into the potentials of a modular approach in distance learning, particularly in the ETEEAP.

Statement of the Objectives

The study sought to determine the utilization of modular distance learning approach in Pangasinan State University (PSU) Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency Accreditation Program (ETEEAP). Specifically, It achieved the following objectives: (a) determine the level of effectiveness of the modular distance learning approach of PSU ETEEAP and (b) determine challenges encountered in the distance learning modular approach as perceived by students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative design using frequency count and thematic analysis. Semi-structured interview through focused group discussions was conducted as a method for gathering data. An interview to the students and faculty was conducted to identify the coping mechanisms on problems encountered in modular distance learning.

According to Johnson et al. (2007), Mixed methods research incorporates aspects of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative views, data collecting, analysis, inference techniques) with the general objectives of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. A stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents.

In gathering relevant data, a survey questionnaire was used thru Google Forms and distributed on different social media. Experts validated the questionnaire. Fifty (50) ETEEAP students, thirty (30) teachers, and ten (10) administrators from the various deputized programs served as respondents, and were chosen thru a stratified random sampling technique. Virtual and phone interviews with the respondents also took place to determine the challenges encountered in the distance learning modular approach.

The researcher employed weighted average mean, frequency counts, and percentages for statistical tools and analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach in the Development of Student Engagement

Table 1 depicts the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the development of student engagement.

Overall, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the development of student's engagement is high, with an overall mean value of 4.00. According to Sadiq & Zamir (2014), In terms of performing given exercises on the spot, the modular approach enhances the possibility of student involvement in the classroom. Consequently, the students feel liberated to study in their unique style.

Table 1. Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach in the Development of Student's Engagement

Indicators	Mean	Description
Through Distance Modular Approach, the Students..		
A. learn to discuss my ideas on the lessons with other students, family members, and friends outside the class.	4.21	Highly Effective
B. learned to put in a lot of effort towards tasks that involved combining thoughts or information from a variety of sources.	4.15	Highly Effective
C. learned to collaborate with others on several exercises and activities that required cooperation and teamwork,	4.25	Highly Effective
D. learn to combine ideas or concepts from several topics when completing projects or accomplishing activities,	4.18	Highly Effective
E. learn to discuss or finish an assignment using an online learning system.	3.20	Moderately Effective
Total	4.00	Highly Effective

Specifically, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the development of student's engagement is also high on the following indicators: *I learned to collaborate with others on several exercises and activities that required cooperation and teamwork* with 4.25 mean value; *I learn to discuss my ideas on the lessons with other students, family members, and friends outside the class* with 4.21 mean value; *I learn to combine ideas or concepts from several topics when completing projects or to accomplish activities*

with 4.18 mean value, and *I learn to put in a lot of effort towards tasks that involved combining thoughts or information from a variety of sources* with 4.15 mean value.

On the other hand, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the development of student's engagement is moderate on the following indicator; *I learn to discuss or finish an assignment using an online learning system* with 3.20 mean value.

According to Morin (2020), pupils who are engaged endure in the face of adversity. Students that are employed are alert and interested. They find significance in what they are learning, whether in a // vague physical or virtual classroom.

Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach in the Enhancement of Student's Communication Skills

Table 2 depicts the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the acquisition of student's communication skills.

Table 2. Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach in the Acquisition of Student's Communication Skills

Indicators	Mean	Description
Through Distance Modular Approach, the Students..		
A. can communicate and persuade others with my thoughts in a complex conversation,	3.45	Moderately Effective
B. have a vast vocabulary that allows me to express myself in areas related to my field.	3.21	Moderately Effective
C. were able to keep a high degree of grammatical accuracy on a regular basis.	2.95	Moderately Effective
D. were able to speak eloquently and spontaneously.	2.30	Less Effective
E. pronunciation and intonation are generally accurate.	2.45	Less Effective
Total	2.87	Moderately Effective

Overall, the level of effectiveness of distance learning modular approach acquisition

of student's communication skills is moderate, with an overall mean value of 2.87.

Specifically, the level of effectiveness of distance learning modular approach acquisition of student's communication skills is moderately effective on the following indicators: *I can communicate and persuade others with my thoughts in a complex conversation* with 3.45 mean value; *I have a wide vocabulary that allows me to express myself on areas related to my field* with 3.21 mean value, and *I am able to keep a high degree of grammatical accuracy on a regular basis* with 2.95 mean value.

On the other hand, the level of effectiveness of distance learning modular approach acquisition of student's communication skills is less effective on the following indicators: *My Pronunciation and intonation are generally accurate* with 2.45 mean value, and *I am able to speak eloquently and spontaneously* with 2.30 mean value.

According to Isman et al. (2003), participants of their study benefit from the flexibility provided by distance education by increasing the productivity of learning and teaching. Aside from these difficulties, there are other hurdles to distant education, which may be areas of communication between participants as a significant role in improving remote education.

Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach in the Acquisition of Student's Critical Thinking Skills

Table 3 depicts the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in acquiring critical thinking skills.

Table 3. Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach in the Acquisition of Critical Thinking Skills

Indicators	Mean	Description
Through Distance Modular Approach, the Students..		
A. learn to discuss my ideas on the lessons with other students, family members, and friends outside the class.	3.55	Highly Effective
B. learned to put in a lot of effort towards tasks that involved combining thoughts	3.85	Highly Effective

or information from a variety of sources.		
C. learned to collaborate with others on several exercises and activities that required cooperation and teamwork,	4.05	Highly Effective
D. learn to combine ideas or concepts from several topics when completing projects or accomplishing activities,	4.55	Very Highly Effective
E. learn to discuss or finish an assignment using an online learning system.	4.70	Very Highly Effective
Total	4.14	Highly Effective

Overall, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the acquisition of critical thinking skills is high, with an overall mean value of 4.14.

Specifically, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the acquisition of critical thinking skills is very high on the following indicators: *I learn to combine ideas or concepts from several topics when completing projects or to accomplish activities* with 4.55 mean value, and *I learn to discuss or finish an assignment using online learning system* with 4.70 mean value.

On the other hand, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the acquisition of critical thinking skills is high on the following indicators: *I learn to discuss my ideas on the lessons with other students, family members, and friends outside the class* with 3.55 mean value; *I learn to put in a lot of effort towards tasks that involved combining thoughts or information from a variety of sources* with 3.85 mean value, and *I learn to collaborate with others on several exercises and activities that required cooperation and teamwork* with 4.05 mean value.

According to the research findings of Kharismawan et al. (2018), the PBL-based module has a 14.32 percent favorable influence on students' critical thinking abilities and content reaction rate, as well as a good effect on student independence.

Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach in the Acquisition of Student's Media Literacy Skills

Table 4 depicts the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the acquisition of student's media literacy skills.

Overall, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in the acquisition of student's media literacy skills is high, with an overall mean value of 3.78. The findings are essential because media and information are everywhere, even if they are not necessarily omnipotent or omniscient. News and information are no longer limited to print and broadcast distribution but are now available to billions of people worldwide and from any location.

Specifically, the level of effectiveness of distance learning modular approach acquisition of student's media literacy skills is high on the following indicators: *I understand how to locate and use information from a range of sources (e.g., print materials such as newspapers, magazines, and books, as well as non-print materials such as video, audio, and digital media) for a variety of reasons* with 4.55 mean value; *I analyze media messages and productions generated by diverse persons using several factors* with 4.10 mean value; and *I recognize that people's media preferences vary* with 4.03 mean value.

On the other hand, the level of effectiveness of distance learning modular approach acquisition of student's media literacy skills is moderate on the following indicators *I am able to get personal meaning from media encounters* with 3.48 mean value; *I employ a variety of mediums and formats for various objectives in order to effectively communicate information and ideas to a wide range of audiences* with 3.45 mean value; and *I understand how the media produces messages that impact people's personal and public life, both historically and today* with 3.39 mean value.

Table 4. Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach in the Acquisition of Student's Media Literacy Skills

Indicators	Mean	Description
Through Distance Modular Approach, the Students..		
A. understand how to locate and use information from a	4.25	Highly Effective

range of sources (e.g., print materials such as newspapers, magazines, and books, as well as non-print materials such as video, audio, and digital media) for a variety of reasons.		
B. recognize that people's media preferences vary.	4.03	Highly Effective
C. were able to get personal meaning from media encounters.	3.48	Moderately Effective
D. understand how the media produces messages that impact people's personal and public life, both historically and today.	3.39	Moderately Effective
E. analyze media messages and productions generated by diverse persons using several factors.	4.10	Highly Effective
F. employ a variety of mediums and formats for various objectives to effectively communicate information and ideas to a wide range of audiences.	3.45	Moderately Effective
Total	3.78	Highly Effective

Summary Table on the Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach

Table 5 depicts the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach as perceived by students.

Table 5. Summary Table on the Level of Effectiveness of Distance Learning Modular Approach

Indicators	Mean	Description
A. Student's Engagement	4.00	Highly Effective
B. Communication Skills	2.87	Moderately Effective
C. Critical Thinking Skills	4.14	Highly Effective
D. Media Literacy Skills	3.78	Highly Effective
Overall Weighted Mean	3.70	Highly Effective

Overall, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach is high, with an overall mean value of 3.70.

Specifically, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach is high on critical thinking skills with a 4.14 mean value, student engagement with a 4.00 mean value, and media literacy skills with a 3.78 mean value. On the other hand, the level of effectiveness of the distance learning modular approach in communication skills is moderate, with 2.87 mean value.

Challenges Encountered in the Distance Learning Modular Approach

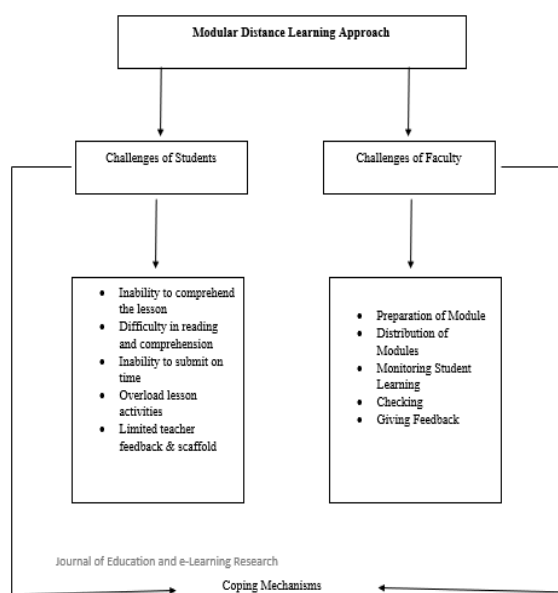
The students narrated the different problems they encountered in the modular distance learning. Narratives from students were the significant findings of the study based from the interview conducted through focused group discussions. The codes shown in Table 1 were the oral narratives recorded by the researcher and were used to generate the general theme of the challenges encountered as presented in Figure 1 after the Table.

Table 1. Challenges Encountered by Students and Faculty

Challenges of Students	Challenges of Faculty
<p><i>There are many activities in the module.</i></p> <p><i>The directions of the modules are difficult to understand.</i></p> <p><i>The module resources are outdated.</i></p> <p><i>Explanation and examples in module lessons are limited.</i></p> <p><i>Figures, diagrams, and charts are limited.</i></p> <p><i>There is a lack of feedback from the teacher.</i></p> <p><i>The module activities can be answered by anyone.</i></p>	<p><i>Preparing/Developing the module is time consuming.</i></p> <p><i>The schedule for the distribution of modules is inconsistent.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of monitoring mechanisms</i></p> <p><i>Checking of module activities is time consuming</i></p> <p><i>There is no definite feedback mechanisms.</i></p> <p><i>There are some students who can't submit their modules on time...</i></p> <p><i>Students submit modules with lacking answers in a particular activity</i></p> <p><i>Students submit modules with no names</i></p> <p><i>Poor attendance of students' submission of modules</i></p>

<p><i>Inefficient assessment tools.</i> <i>The time duration in finishing the module is limited.</i> <i>The module is not self-instructional.</i></p>	
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Thematic analysis was conducted to determine the themes. The themes on the challenges encountered by ETEEAP students and faculty which surfaced out of the thematic analysis conducted are presented in the framework.



Following the frequency count of the codes, it can be deduced that much of the responses on challenges encountered by students focus on the overload lesson activities while responses on challenges encountered by students focus on checking.

As ETEEAP faculty face different challenges in the utilization of Modular Distance Learning Approach, they strive to overcome such challenges through different approaches. Based on the results of the study, faculty have various coping strategies on the different challenges that they encounter. Time management is one of the steps they take to ease the tasks they handle everyday. Provision of a schedule

of activities and balancing tasks, faculty will be able to deal with tasks in ways that they know which to prioritize. The accomplishment of tasks such as printing, distribution and checking of modules will be achieved if a faculty knows how to spend his/her time efficiently. On the other hand, ETEEAP students overcome the challenges by having peer support system.

CONCLUSIONS

From the preceding findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

The distance learning modular approach utilized by PSU ETEEAP is working well particularly in students' critical thinking skills, engagement, and media literacy.

Further, the students perceive that modules are less enticing due to overwhelming activities with less explanation and graphical content. The students also believe that anyone can answer the module, giving them the notion of just letting others answer on their behalf.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This result provides contextual pieces of evidence on the multifaceted challenges that confront students and faculty. It is recommended that these difficulties should be considered as inputs for the further development of the current educational process to respond to the challenge of innovating educational delivery mechanisms in PSU-ETEEAP, this includes the process of how they prepare, distribute and collect modules, monitor students' learning, check and evaluate their outputs, as well as provide feedback on students' performance.

For future researchers, large surveys should be conducted to further understand the difficulties of the students across levels. As qualitative research, the result of this work is also sensitive to its context. Thus, it should only be applied as far as the social, cultural, and educational context of this research is concerned.

The PSU administration may sustain the implementation of the learning modular approach in ETEEAP by enhancing the capabilities of faculty members on knowledge, skills, and attitudes through webinar workshops on the latest trends in the modular approach. Further, the administration may enhance the process on module writing and assessment.

Moreover, the administration may conduct a series of training on module writing to capacitate the faculty members to come up with more competent, updated, and well-preferred modules.

In addition, a follow-up study on the correlation between the learning module approach and communication skills is recommended to discover essential findings as basis for an intervention plan to enhance students' communication skills while engaging in the modular approach.

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