

PARA-TEACHERS FOR ENHANCED COLLABORATION-INSPIRED LEARNING: A NEW NORMAL INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Project PENCIL or Para-teachers for Enhanced Collaboration-Inspired Learning is an innovation that made use of para-teachers, who are individuals who work closely with a qualified classroom teacher to give additional support to students. Para-teachers help the students answer the modules at home, especially the children whose parents have difficulties helping them. This study investigated the effect of employing para-teachers for the learning process of students enrolled in Modular Distance Learning (MDL). The experimental design was used in this study; 15 exploratory questions were used to assess the performance of 20 students from Rogelio P. Macadangdang Elementary School who have problems in MDL owing to their parents' or guardians' inability to help them in answering the modules. The study utilized mean, standard deviation, and T- test as statistical tools to compare and interpret the results of the pretest and the posttest. The results showed that the pupils' performance in the MDL before Project PENCIL's implementation is significantly different from their performance after its implementation. Students exhibited a very satisfactory performance after Project PENCIL implementation. Thus, its continued implementation is recommended not only in improving the pupils' performance in MDL but also in other areas concerning students' development and other important undertakings.

Keywords: Para-teachers, collaboration-inspired, new normal, intervention program

INTRODUCTION

Educational systems globally have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, contributing to the nearly complete closing of schools, universities and colleges. According to Collis and Vegas (2020) that UNESCO estimated 192 countries have closed their schools and colleges, affecting over 90% of the world's students and almost 1.6 billion children and young adults. Along with this, Schleicher (2020) stated that the many inadequacies and inequities in our education systems have been exposed by this crisis, from access to broadband and computers required for online education, to the

sustainable ways needed to concentrate on learning, to the mismatch between resources and needs. Moreover, McElrath (2020), showed in a survey that the utilization of internet resources by people from different socioeconomic backgrounds can explain patterns of digital inequality. In the Philippines, Nakpil (2020) reported that DepEd is expected to resume in October, but according to the Department of Education, holding traditional classes is far from happening anytime soon. Also, De Guzman (2021) wrote that teachers worry that the extended shutdown is hurting kids' learning and threatening their futures at a time when the country desperately needs a youthful, educated workforce to restore the

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excellent economic development it was experiencing before the outbreak. Threatened by the health crisis challenge, parents are beginning to consider other ways to give their children an education while maintaining security at home. Among the different learning modalities offered by the Department of Education in this new normal, Bernardo (2020) reported that Modular Distance Learning (MDL) option was made popular by parents/guardians in public schools where 8.9 million parents preferred modular distance learning when the survey was conducted during the online enrollment. According to Malaya (2020), individualized teaching is a component of the modular distance learning that enables students to employ self-learning modules (SLMs) in print or digital format/electronic copy, depending on their needs.

While many of the schools in the Davao region prepare for online and or blended learning modalities, schools in rural areas chose to implement modular distance learning. But it seems like the path to modular learning is rough, especially for those in rural areas. Many of the pupils are still not capable of reading, writing and learning on their own yet. And the fact that these already struggling children's parents or guardians are also illiterate makes the matter more complicated (Perez, 2020). This situation is also true in Rogelio P. Macadandang Elementary School. Based on data, 12 out 36 or 33% of the parents in the school claimed that they are having a hard time assisting their children because of their limited knowledge and skills, especially in reading comprehension. Moreover, these parents specified that English, Science, and Mathematics are the hardest to teach among the subject areas.

To address the above-mentioned condition, the researcher proposed an intervention program called the Project "PENCIL" or Para-teachers for Enhanced Collaboration-Inspired Learning. This project intends to utilize the so-called Para-teachers which refers to an individual who works closely with a certified classroom teacher to provide

additional assistance to pupils. The para-teachers will assist the students, most especially those whose parents are having difficulties in assisting to answer the modules at home. Para-teachers are expected to fill in the gap and provide the much-needed assistance to learners to cope with the new learning modality (Petinglay, 2020).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study primarily ascertained the impact of utilizing para-teachers in the learning process of the pupils in the modular distance learning. Specifically, it sought answers to the following specific objectives:

1. Compare the academic performance of the pupils before and after the implementation of the Project PENCIL
2. Evaluate the performance of the pupils in terms of module completion before and after the implementation of the Project PENCIL
3. Determine if there is a significant difference between the performance of the pupils in modular distance learning before and after the implementation of Project PENCIL.

METHODOLOGY

The respondents of the study were the 20 pupils of Rogelio P. Macadandang Elementary School who were noted to have difficulties in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning due to lack of parents'/guardians' capacity to assist their children in answering the modules. All respondents were officially enrolled in SY 2020-2021. Those pupils who were noted to have performed well in answering the modules did not qualify for this study.

This research employed the experimental design. This was utilized since the main purpose of this research was to determine the effectiveness of Project PENCIL in helping pupils who are having difficulties in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning (MDL). The group of pupils' performance in the



Modular Distance Learning (MDL) were measured using the Exploratory questions. This tool encompassed 15 items which measured the level of pupils’ performance in the MDL. Moreover, this tool was divided into two phases. The first phase is the pretest that was employed to measure level the pupils’ performance in the Modular Distance Learning (MDL) before the Project PENCIL were employed. Finally, the second phase was employed to measure level the pupils’ performance in the Modular Distance Learning (MDL) after Project PENCIL were employed.

After gathering all the necessary data, immediately, the tabulation and analysis of data were done. The results of the pretest and the posttest were compared using the mean, Standard deviation, and T-test. Mean and standard deviation were used to measure the levels of pupils’ performance in the Modular Distance Learning before and after Project PENCIL was employed. Standard deviation was used to measure the variability and homogeneity of the research data. Also, the independent T-test was used to measure the significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores of the pupils.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The level of performance of the pupils in the Modular Distance Learning (MDL) Before and After the Project PENCIL

Table 1
Level of performance of the pupils in the Modular Distance Learning (MDL)

	Mean	SD
Before the Project PENCIL	2.52	0.51
After the PENCIL	3.46	0.57

Table 1 shows the level of performance of the pupils in the Modular Distance Learning (MDL) on pretest and posttest. For the level of pupils’ performance in MDL before the Project, PENCIL was employed, it obtains an overall mean of 2.52 with a

description of low and a standard deviation of 0.51. These findings describe that the level of pupils’ performance in MDL before the Project PENCIL is poor based on the scores of the selected pupils characterized as homogeneous based on their consistent responses as quantified by a standard.

More so, the level of pupils’ performance in MDL after the Project PENCIL was employed got a mean of 3.46, which is described as high with a standard deviation of 0.57. This entails that the pupils manifest a good level of performance in Modular distance learning and their responses are varied.

Moreover, the parents expressed that assisting their children in answering the modules has been made easy because of the implementation of Project PENCIL.

“... karon nga naa ang mga Para-teachers, mas madali namo masulbad amoa kalisdanan sa module kay naa sila mopasabot sa amoa...” (IDI P1)

“...kung malisdan ko sa pagtudlo sa akua anak, naa mi Maduolan nga Para-teachers...” (IDI P2)

2. The Significant Difference between the Level of Pupils’ Performance in the Modular Distance Learning Before and After the Project PENCIL was Implemented

The below table presents the significant difference between the knowledge-based level in action research of the teacher evaluators before and after the dynamic sessions. The results exhibit a significant difference between the level of pupils’ performance in the modular distance learning before and after the project pencil was implemented. It has a p-value of 0.000 which denotes that the level of pupils’ performance in the modular distance learning

is significantly different from the pupils' performance after the dynamic sessions.

Table 2
Significant Difference between the Level of Pupils' Performance in the Modular Distance Learning

	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision@ $\alpha = 0.05$
Before the Project PENCIL	2.52	0.51			
			9.987	0.000	Rejected
After the Project PENCIL	3.46	0.57			

“... mas nitaas akoo mga grado sa katong mga subjects nga lisod kay naa man motabang kung maglisod ko sa akoo modules...” (IDI L1)

“...mas dali ko karon mahuman sa pag-answer sa akoo mga modules tungod kay teacher Hazil...” (IDI L2)

3. Proposed Innovation, Intervention and Strategy

The researcher initiated an intervention program called Project “PENCIL” or **Para-teachers for ENhanced Collaboration Inspired Learning**. The subjects of this action research were pupils and parents of Rogelio P. Macadangdang Elementary School of the district of Kapalong East of the Division of Davao del Norte for the School Year 2020-2021.

Figure 1 displays the scheme for the Project PENCIL. This intervention program has four (4) phases. In phase 1, the school identified possible para-teachers coming from the community that will meet the criteria set by the school. Then, the qualified para-teachers have undergone capacity-building LAC sessions to equip them with the tasks that were given to them. Meanwhile, in phase 2, the

intervention program together with the para-teachers was introduced to the parents during the PTA meeting. More so, there were separate meeting with the PTA officers and BOD for the possible provisions of snacks for our para-teachers. During phase 3, the para-teachers started their tasks in assisting the pupils in answering the modules prioritizing those pupils whose parents don't have the capacity to assist their children. Then, there was a weekly “kumustahan” with the school head, teachers, and para-teachers every Monday. It noted some challenges and difficulties experienced by the parents and pupils, and identify the possible solutions. Finally, phase 4 is monitoring and evaluation of the program. Series of interviews and conferences with the school head, teachers, para-teachers, parents, and PTA officers will be done to assess whether the program being initiated is effective and has a great impact in the performance of the pupils in modular distance learning.

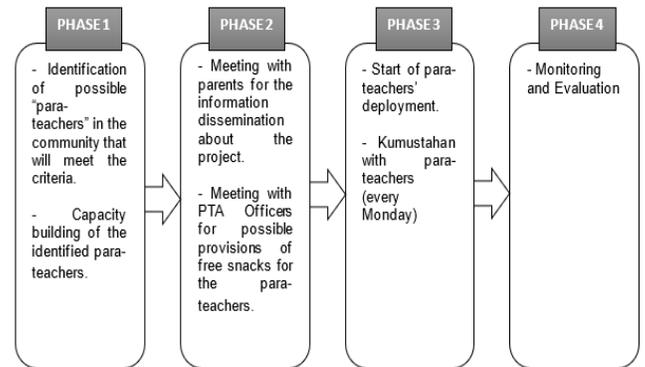


Figure 1. Project PENCIL Scheme

Furthermore, the researcher applied the Voluntary Work Scheme for this intervention program in which the identified para-teachers have given their services and commitment voluntarily. This scheme aimed to help the parents assist the children in their modules while helping the para-teachers improve their skills and employment prospects by giving them an opportunity to take up volunteering as part of their non-formal and

informal learning process (Youth Voluntary Work, 2015). It also enabled them to discover the value of voluntary service and help to foster a sense of community and active citizenship. However, it was highlighted that the para-teachers will not be the one to answer the exercises in the module, instead, they will collaborate with the parents in assisting the pupils.

On the other hand, there are possible risks that could be faced during the implementation of this program, especially during this time of the pandemic. Our para-teachers, parents, and pupils might be vulnerable for this COVID-19 virus. To alleviate this risk, the school conducted an orientation about the implementation of proper health protocols during the conduct of this project. It was noted that the safety of everyone shall be the utmost priority of the school.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The level of pupils' performance in the MDL is low before implementation of Project PENCIL.
2. The level of pupils' performance in the MDL is high after implementation of Project PENCIL.
3. The pupils' performance in the MDL before the implementation of Project PENCIL is significantly different from their performance after its implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher recommends the continued implementation of the Project PENCIL because this is perceived to be very effective not only in improving the pupils' performance in the implementation of modular distance learning but also in other areas concerning pupils' development and other undertakings.

Parallel to this, due to the efforts of the teachers and para-teachers during the implementation of the Project PENCIL, it was found out that there is a declining interest in reading among our pupils. It was specified that the lack of reading materials in their respective homes is one of the reasons why these children tend to choose playing over reading. It is also noted that those children who are having the difficulty in answering the modules are those having low interest in reading. As a result, the Project KinaBOOKasan is launched. This project aims to help children gain more interest in reading and inspire more learners to be a better reader even in this challenging time of the pandemic by establishing mini-libraries around the community.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Edgar L. Manaran works as a school principal in one of the integrated schools in the Department of Education, Division of Davao del Norte in the Philippines.

Aside from finishing his E-Teacher Scholarship course, he also finished numerous Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and facilitated American English workshops for teachers in the Philippines with the support of the U.S. Embassy, Manila. Recently, he facilitated a MOOC Camp on Assessment of English Language Learners which was participated not just by the teachers and school heads from the Philippines but also from Madagascar and Japan.