

EVALUATION OF ENGLISH SELF-LEARNING MODULES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING

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Abstract

The study evaluated English Self-Learning Modules and proposed an enhanced learning material that will be helpful in the modular distance learning experience. This specifically answered on the strengths and weaknesses of the Self-Learning Modules in terms of Intellectual Property Rights Compliance, Learning Competencies, Instructional Design and Organization, Instructional Quality, Assessment, and, Readability; suggested Alternative Interventions suggested to strengthen the identified weaknesses in the Self-Learning Modules; and enhanced Self-Learning Modules based on the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluated materials. The study used a mixed method using a Descriptive–Evaluative Design where Key Informants answered a Survey Questionnaire and underwent Key Informants Interview to record the strengths and weaknesses of the Self-Learning Modules. Thematic analysis and percentage were used in the study to identify salient themes from qualitative and quantitative responses of the participants, respectively. Relevant findings revealed that the strengths of Self-Learning Modules are accuracy in citations, compliance of copyrights, proper acknowledgement of the references, accuracy in content, appropriateness in the presentation of objectives, logical organization of content, integration of valuable traits, development of 21st century skills, alignment of assessments to lesson objectives and appropriateness of content and vocabulary to the learners' level. On the other hand, Self-Learning Modules displayed weaknesses on the following areas such as rotten links, missing bibliographies and references, unpacking of broad competencies, outdated content and information, grammatical errors, development of lessons that allow for review, providing answer keys, unclear presentation of instruction and seamless transitions of lessons.

Keywords: *Evaluation, Self-Learning Modules, Modular Distance Learning, Grade 7 English, Learning amidst COVID-19, Enhanced Learning Materials*

INTRODUCTION

The question whether education can thrive in the midst of a pandemic has been of particular interest to the academe and to its stakeholders. Schools, being a vital aspect of our societies, are no exception to the drastic changes the world has experienced (Dangle and Sumaoang, 2020). The feasibility and the severity of upholding the ideals of education at times when physical contact is deemed inadmissible has made public and expert opinion collide. The conventional practice claims to enhance a variety of learning and social skills among teachers and students as they physically

attend classes and engage with one another to fulfill their academic needs and demands. Yet, in the context of a global public health emergency, the traditional learning practice has found itself irrelevant.

Nevertheless, with confidence and trust to technological advancements, the Department of Education stood by its principle that education cannot wait and therefore, must continue; prompting the academic communities to direct its focus on what appears to be the vaguely familiar concept of Distance Learning Modalities to become the new arena of the crucial process of teaching and learning (DepEd, 2020). With full confidence in its propensity to succeed, DepEd has implemented Modular Distance Learning (MDL) as one of its modes to be able to provide quality education and realize its mission and vision for Filipino learners (Dangle and Sumaoang, 2020). The Secretary of Education even stated that the Education Bureau is putting focus on flexible learning modules which can cater to all students (Manila Bulletin, 2020). Moreover, Bernardo J, as cited by Dangle and Sumaoang (2020), reported that through reliable surveys, schools have learned that printed and digital modules emerge as the most preferred modality by parents due to the modules' convenient and flexible nature specifically to those whose financial status hinder their chance on online learning.

In consonance with this, Self-Learning Modules became a cardinal component of modular instruction which can never be trivialized. They became a teaching strategy toward a self-contained and independent unit of instruction with a primary focus on a few well-defined objectives (Nardo, 2017). Modules naturally set learning opportunities that are systematically organized around a well-defined topic containing the elements of learning instruction; directing students to practice and rehearse information independently.

In spite of the confidence in promising plans laid out by the Department of Education at the onset, the actual experience prompted many students and parents to react negatively towards the pressing issues with Self-Learning Modules. In their recent study, Dangle and Sumaoang (2020) deduced prevailing constraints relative to MDL claiming that modules lack clear instructions and explanations rendering them too difficult to answer or accomplish. Moreover, their study further revealed that Self-Learning Modules have plenty of learning exercises which results in students' lack of motivation and focus. The overwhelming number of activities in each module remains one of the major problems that emerged in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning which makes it difficult for students, para-teachers, and even educators to succeed in their goals. In

addition, regardless of the mandate to include only the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC) to direct the focus of instruction to the indispensable competencies that learners must acquire in response to some anticipated challenges in learning delivery, students still find modular instruction overwhelming due certain weaknesses (Commons Ph, 2020). Cabral (2021) revealed that due to the Department of Education's abruptness in producing instructional materials, the learning materials they have provided displayed certain errors and weaknesses – putting DepEd's pronouncements on quality education to a question.

As a response, teachers tend to create their own learning worksheets which are deemed to be responsive to the student's context and therefore uphold the continual practice of learning opportunities and delivery of quality and accessible education. However, the Self-Learning Modules provided by the Regional Office are no longer in circulation – not anymore serving their intended recipients as the former is being substituted by activity sheets individual teachers are crafting.

With the pressing issues surrounding this learning context, the researchers believed that it is quintessential to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Grade 7 English Self-Learning Modules in the First Quarter of School Year 2020-2021 considering the necessary variables in accordance with DepEd's evaluation tool for the content of learning packets namely; Intellectual Property Rights Compliance, Learning Competencies, Instructional Design and Organization, Instructional Quality, Assessment, and Readability. These six factors were selected in order to remain in consonance with the standards of the Department of Education when it comes to quality learning resources and to ensure that modules are geared towards the needs of the target learners. Evaluating the provided SLMs through the lens of actual users is necessary for the enhancement of the former which are currently not being directly used by DepEd schools. Furthermore, the study also endeavored to conceptualize a Guidebook that aids and empowers educators to enhance Self-Learning Modules to improve the modular learning experience. The Guidebook exemplified ways to improve the weaknesses discovered in the Self-Learning Modules investigated. Moreover, Enhanced Self-Learning Modules were proposed as another offshoot of the study.

The study was conducted in three secondary schools of the School's Division Office of Legazpi City with a huge population. The chosen locales were Legazpi City National High School at Rawis, Legazpi City; Gogon High School at Gogon, Legazpi City; and Cabangan High School at Cabangan, Legazpi City. Since DepEd Legazpi's primary mode of education is Modular Distance

Learning, providing students with contextualized, responsive, and well-organized Self-Learning Modules are extremely beneficial in developing their learning skills. After all, the Department of Education believes that the learning resources utilized in schools reflect the type of education they provide, and if quality education is to be provided, quality learning resources must be supplied to students and teachers (Manila Bulletin, 2021).

The researchers believe that instructional modules- on which students enrolled in modular education greatly depend- can be improved through acquiring the perspective of educators whose participation in the study has been of great help in producing a responsive and research-based guidebook and enhanced learning material that is considered the necessary aspects in the crucial process of modular distance learning. The researchers also believed in the capacity of the Department of Education-Regional Office No. V to provide ample support to the enhanced learning materials and further improve the modular learning experience of Grade 7 English learners, who, among all other levels in secondary schools, experience a major transition phase where they are required to have acquired the basic comprehension skills of reading English texts.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed three (3) instruments to help the researchers elicit pertinent data and elaborate responses; providing validation for qualitative and quantitative datasets. These instruments significantly helped the researchers in evaluating the Grade 7 English Self-Learning Modules of the First Quarter of School Year 2020-2021, in conceptualizing a Guidebook poised to help teachers enhance modules and in Enhancing Self-Learning Modules. The instruments adopted were created and validated by the experts working with the Department of Education. The instruments were:

Unstructured Interview Guide. This provided a framework for the researchers the conduct an interview with Key Informants without the use of an interview schedule. Instead, it included an anticipated series of open-ended questions that flows like a natural conversation based on the respondent's responses, related topics, or issues that might be of particular interest to the objectives of the study- allowing the researchers to probe deeper and develop a sense of understanding of the subject under investigation. The line of questioning was directed towards the strengths and weaknesses of the SLMs, as well as the challenges, experiences, perspectives, and alternative interventions suggested by the key informants to strengthen the weaknesses of the learning materials. Furthermore, the unstructured interview guide was patterned in congruence with the

statements presented in the adopted survey questionnaire to help provide validation for both the qualitative and quantitative strands.

Survey Questionnaires. These were used for the quantitative strand and it consisted of two (2) parts. The first part contained the basic information of the respondents such as name (optional), address, contact information, grade level assigned, and subject/s handled for the School year 2020-2021. Using a Yes-No response scheme, the second part consisted of indicators containing variables pertaining to the SLM's standards compliance in terms of (a) Intellectual Property Rights Compliance, (b) Learning Competencies, (c) Instructional Design and Organization, (d) Instructional Quality, (e) Assessment, and (f) Readability. The researchers adopted the available and recent evaluation tool used in evaluating the learning worksheets developed by teachers in the field, to be able to capture the ideals and standards the Department of Education is after.

Field Notes and Audio-Recorder. These were utilized to make sure that all the important data were documented and recorded during the conduct of unstructured interviews. These served as a tracer of collected information and facts as the researcher is expected to note the progress of the research endeavor from time to time.

This study employed a mixed method using a Descriptive –Evaluative Design to record the strengths and weaknesses of the Self-Learning Modules under investigation. A Descriptive-Evaluative Design is an approach of Descriptive Research that aims to provide information related to the level of effectiveness of the subject being evaluated by the study (Maze, 2022). Descriptive Evaluations use a variety of qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures and analysis methods to describe the process and impact of a development or implementation of a particular system (Gu and Warren, n.d.) Through this process, the researchers were able to obtain valuable and sufficient data and feedback to describe the research problem in detail with analysis, interpretation, and integration of data - allowing the researchers to identify the areas for enhancement.

Moreover, Descriptive Design was used to describe the research problem and obtain the pertinent data and reliable responses which helped the researchers develop a better conclusion significant to the development of this study's offshoot: The Enhanced Self-Learning Modules. The study utilized a mixed research method to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches within phases of the research process; it followed the Convergent Strategy of Mixed Method where qualitative data were analyzed concurrently and independently (Terrell and Edmonds, n.d.). The

qualitative and quantitative strands were implemented independently from each other and the integration of these strands occurred during data interpretation. The researchers deduced comprehensive conclusions by synthesizing the results and complementary data of the strands.

To measure the strengths and weaknesses of the Self-Learning Modules investigated, a validated adjectival rating was utilized. The percentage of responses was interpreted through a scale with the following equivalence: 1-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, and 81-100% interpreted as Weak, Slightly Weak, Barely Strengthened, Strengthened, and Highly Strengthened adjectival rating, respectively.

RESULT/FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Self-Learning Modules

The six crucial components of Self-Learning Modules presented the standards and criteria that helped researchers scrutinize its characteristics and peculiarities. The survey questionnaire and key informants' interviews deduced significant strengths that needed to be sustained and as well as the underlying weaknesses which called for enhancement. Ideally, Self-Learning Modules must be strengthened in all the variables laid out by the Department of Education to ensure the quality of learning resources.

Intellectual Property Rights Compliance.

Intellectual Property Rights Compliance refers to the compliance with the copyright rule and law in the reproduction of learning resources used in the modular learning modality. Self-Learning Modules utilize original and even third-party content to be able to become an effective learning resource, however, the need to ensure that learning resources have no copyright violations is a necessary practice. Since learning requires a lot of research and supplemental materials, copyright violations became a critical concern of many industries most especially of the people who devoted their efforts and intellect to the scholarly field of education. In today's generation where massive use of digital search engines is apparent, many individuals unconsciously commit copyright infringements and errors in citing and copying links – leading to even more serious concerns. In the case of academic communities, educators underscore the severity of adhering to Copyright laws as stewards of an institution that nurtures, encourages, and protects the handiwork of all people.

Table 1. Strengths and Weaknesses for Intellectual Property Rights Compliance

Standards	Percentage (%)	Adjectival Rating
The learning resource has no copyright violations.	50%	Barely Strengthened
The copyrighted texts and visuals used in the LR are cited.	75%	Strengthened
The copyrighted materials used in the LR are accurately cited.	87.5%	Highly Strengthened
The references are properly cited in the Bibliography.	50%	Barely Strengthened
MEAN	65.63%	Strengthened

The Self-Learning Modules’ Intellectual Property Rights Compliance was found to have a *Strengthened* impression of abiding by the provisions of the Republic Act 8293 or the “Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines” which recognizes intellectual property systems and protects individuals' and entities' intellectual property. High Statistics and positive responses from the Key Informants regarding copyright compliance are a good indicator that SLM developers and, as well as teachers, are cognizant of the importance of acknowledging the sources of information in crafting learning materials.

Consequently, as contemporary society has been abruptly reliant on technology (Arora, 2021), accessibility in acquiring copyrighted texts, visuals, and images became manageable; likewise, the detection and validation of certain content violating the Intellectual Property Code also became easier – making module developers cautious and wary of the possible consequences of their action. The possible risks and ramifications caused by erroneous and inaccurate citations comprise the basic premise that both learning material developers and educators are aware of copyrights’ significance resulting for them to comply with the existing mandates of standards and provisions of law.

Moreover, incorrect citations and references are poised to drastically impact the effectiveness and credibility of a learning resource, thus, bruising its integrity and affecting the entire teaching and learning process of academic communities. Despite the challenge, schools acknowledge the severity of the copyright standards that govern the creation of learning materials; making Self-Learning Modules Intellectual Property Rights compliant. This premise enabled the

Self-Learning Modules to gain protection from any form of copyright violations like plagiarism and secures its property license such as a patent.

The key Informants showed that Self-Learning Modules have undergone numerous proofreading and evaluation processes before being distributed to schools for students' consumption. There are also extensive reviewing, checking, commenting, and evaluating processes imposed throughout the production of learning materials, likewise, setting standards followed by writers, editors, and evaluators to ensure the intellectual property rights compliance of the learning materials is also observed. Some of the strengths that were stressed in the SLM's Intellectual Property Rights Compliance were accuracy in citations, copyright compliance, and proper acknowledgment of the references.

However, the weaknesses found in Intellectual Property Rights Compliance can be associated with the late pronouncement of DepEd Order No. 001 s. 2021 on its issuance of standard criteria set for the evaluation of Self-Learning Modules that aimed to assess SLMs' content, language, and design and layout. During previous terms, no concrete memorandum was released. Because of DepEd's non-issuance of its criteria, writers and teachers omitted some standards including the need for materials to be copyright compliant; thus, affecting the quality of Self-Learning in terms of the learning materials' precision in citing references which are highly crucial in attaining Grade 7 competencies like in lessons that require students to browse and watch reference materials to improve their learning experience and augment their knowledge.

The findings imply that learning resources with the accurate citation will lead to students' confidence to rely on the information presented in SLMs. Having correct citations and references gives the impression of a scholarly work that upholds even the details that might not seem related to lesson content. Further, based on the respondents, it can be deduced that DepEd imposed strict and careful regulations on the entire process of crafting Self-Learning Modules to ensure their quality. The results of this data can also be used to help schools improve their technical review committees since there are still minimal cases of copyright violation issues found in learning materials including typographical errors, miscopied links, missing bibliography, and misplaced references. Moreover, the adage that mentions that one cannot give what isn't possessed is quite relevant in this case. Teachers are encouraged to attend trainings and programs to further enhance their skills in citing sources and creating bibliographies. Allowing teachers to have adequate knowledge of copyright violations can improve their practice in assuring quality and effective learning experiences.

Learning Competencies

Similar to what education upholds, the set of learning competencies needs to be in congruent to the contents of learning resources and style of instruction to achieve certain academic goals and triumphs. Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS) highlight the learning competencies argued to be necessary in developing a student’s practical and lifelong skills for learning, and in eventually attaining a successful life (DepEd, 2020).

Basically, the Department of Education introduced MELCS as a response to the constraints of distance learning amidst a crisis; it is one of the most crucial variables of distance learning as the shift of educational paradigms made it impossible for teachers and students to learn the same way as before the pandemic took place, and to achieve valuable competencies listed in the 2016 curriculum guide. Therefore, the development of MELCs does not diminish the standards set by the full K to 12 curriculum guides as these streamlined competencies serve as guidelines for teachers in addressing the instructional needs of learners while ensuring that curriculum standards are maintained and achieved.

Table 2. Strengths and Weaknesses for Learning Competencies

Standards	Percentage (%)	Adjectival Rating
Content is consistent with the targeted DepEd Learning Competencies (LCs) intended for the learning area and grade level.	37.5%	Slightly Weak
MEAN	37.5%	Slightly Weak

and competencies by providing the latter with relevant instructions, activities, and clear targets Despite the importance of learning competencies in the students ' learning endeavor, students' level of competence and capacity to learn are being compromised due to the lack of unpacked competencies presented in Self-Learning Modules. The Key Informants have observed that Self-Learning Modules contain broad competencies that hinder students in attaining mastery of the subject. Upon using the Self-Learning Modules for the first quarter of the school year, they affirmed that students' performance showed inadequate learning and abysmal progress.

Learning Competencies are not consistent with the targeted learning tasks of Grade 7 students, which can result in failures in meeting the expected learning competencies that students need to acquire. The Department of Education must recognize and corroborate the experiences of

teachers in dealing with unpacked and repetitive MELCS to better improve the consistency of content in targeting the indispensable competencies that students should attain. The SLM's consistency on MELCS was found to be slightly weak as interviews revealed that there were competencies presented that were too broad, yet remained unpacked. This finding challenges the memorandum issued by DepEd (2020) about Clarifications on the Use of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) and Other Related Issues which states that SLM developers and as well as teachers should become faithful in following the MELCS in crafting learning resources and sheets in order for students to obtain the indispensable competencies they need to perform. The respondents' views suggest that unpacking is a necessary practice to attain and ensure the quality of Self-Learning Modules' content and objectives alignment. Clearly, the promising development of the MELCS was countered by educators suggesting that MELCS needs to be reviewed with respect to the complexity of a particular lesson. It is also gleaned from the data that teachers need to learn the rudimentary practices surrounding the unpacking of certain competencies. Deng (2011) as cited by Cahapay (2020) explained the importance of unpacking in the achievement of a successful learning experience. The author revealed that as the curriculum seeks to be implemented, interpreting the intended curriculum needs a thorough process of curriculum unpacking. The unpacking process can be informed and driven by a very clear understanding of the curriculum contained in the materials of the intended curriculum.

Educators believe that the best possible way to attain the learning targets is to begin with the end in mind. DepEd (2020) states that SLM developers and as well as teachers should be faithful in following the MELCS in crafting learning resources and sheets in order for students to obtain the indispensable competencies they need. Perhaps, teachers can become faithful to the achievement of the predetermined competencies yet be taught on how to improve the Self-Learning Modules through unpacking. Consequently, Nielsen (2016) affirmed that observing clarity on objectives, understanding the learning standards, and following the necessary guidance in the unpacking of learning targets such as identification, determination, and consideration of essential learning competencies are tools for effective instruction in the modular distance learning modality. The author believed that unpacking the lessons will lead to mastery of the subject matter for both students and teachers.

The results imply that MELCS are found to be broad; causing the materials to remotely target the supposed skills and expected learning outcomes of the students. In response to this concern, teachers should further improve their abilities in unpacking lessons and competencies

since the interview revealed that not all teachers have received sufficient trainings in unpacking. Aside from the case of unpacking competencies, repetitive competencies and lessons are also found within SLMs. This can be attributed to the fact that teachers have no mandate to try and correct what has been provided by the Department of Education, however, the least teachers can do is to modify their lesson objectives in order to address the issues induced by relatively unpacked broad competencies. Although unpacking is not necessarily intended to become a process of classroom instruction, Cahapay (2020) mentioned that it has a potent influence on the learning outcomes as a result of classroom instruction. It can be understood that the educators are still responsible for unpacking certain competencies; the need for educators to become fully equipped, and familiar with the process of unpacking is a primary concern of schools in Modular Distance Learning. Although modular distance instruction fosters independent learning, teachers and learning education bureaus need to help the learners in the attainment of the expected skills.

Instructional Design and Organization

Instructional Design and Organization pertains to a systematic framework used in designing printed learning resources. It translates the principles of teaching and learning into place for teaching learning strategies, developmental activities, and evaluative measures that complement the contents (DepEd Order No. 1, 2021). Moreover, it refers to the creation of instructional and learning experiences and materials used in teaching that results in the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills.

Instructional design and organization follow a system of assessing needs, designing the process, developing materials, and gauging its effectiveness. Basically, it refers to a key variable that highlights that the development of instructional materials used in the modular distance learning modality must include attributes that contribute to the achievement of specific objectives, and the development of skills and competencies aligned to the target level.

Table 3. Strengths and Weaknesses for Instructional Design and Organization

Standards	Percentage (%)	Adjectival Rating
The LR contributes to the achievement of specific objectives of the learning area and grade level for which it is intended.	100%	Highly Strengthened
Sequencing of contents and activities within each lesson facilitates achievement of objectives.	25%	Slightly Weak
Content is suitable to the target learner’s level of development, needs, and experience.	50%	Barely Strengthened

Content reinforces, enriches, and / or leads to the mastery of the targeted learning competencies intended for the learning area and grade level.	50%	Barely Strengthened
Content is logically developed and organized throughout the material. (Lessons/activities are arranged from simple to complex, from observable to abstract).	87.5%	Highly Strengthened
The LR contains useful introductions, reviews, summaries, and other devices that facilitate smooth progression from one lesson to another.	50%	Barely Strengthened
Development of lessons allows for review, comparison, and integration with previous lessons.	-2%	Weak
Motivational strategies (e.g., overviews, advance organizers, puzzles, games, etc.) are provided.	50%	Barely Strengthened
The LR uses various teaching and learning strategies to meet individual differences/ learning styles. (if applicable)	25%	Slightly Weak
The LR develops higher cognitive skills (e.g., critical thinking skills, creativity, learning by doing, problem solving) and 21 st century skills.	100%	Highly Strengthened
The LR enhances the development of desirable values and traits	100%	Highly Strengthened
MEAN	55.68	Barely Strengthened

The respondents asserted that the Self-Learning Modules follow the guidelines set by the Department of Education wherein it certainly delivers its purpose as an effective instrument of learning in a modular distance approach. The strengths that the respondents pointed out are the contribution of the self-learning modules to the achievement of specific objectives, logical development and organization of content, development of higher cognitive skills, and the development of desirable values and traits. It is extremely crucial to note that teachers, who were the ones who created the Self-Learning Modules, are natural material developers.

Respondents revealed in the interview that educators are expected to pattern the design of their learning materials to the usual lesson plan. The results could be attributed to the fact that teachers are adept at designing lessons that are congruent with the specified objectives. Teachers, even before the pandemic, taught using their individually crafted lesson plan where they are tasked to write, conceptualize and formulate content out of mere

competencies – adhering to the beginning with an end in mind principle. Moreover, this also supports the findings that educators arrange their lessons from simple to complex development. The logical arrangements of content are practiced by teachers even in traditional instruction affirming that learners can only proceed and perform the difficult tasks if they have already mastered the simple ones. In addition, key informants confirm that they are well aware of the importance of integrating values in the lesson; the most common form of values integration in the lesson is found in the situation where examples or morals of the literature are used in the study. The end goal of education is to create a community with civilized and well-mannered individuals. This may have prompted educators to integrate values into their lessons and teach students vicariously how they can be able to use their intelligence for society's sake.

However, although there are quite several positive reactions to the learning resource's design and organization, the percentage of the inclusion of review, comparison, and integration of the previous lesson reveals otherwise. The respondents noticed a disarrangement of the modules which is why the key informants suggest that there is a need to do a few changes regarding the sequential arrangements of the modules where Past and Perfect Tenses must first be discussed before taking up lessons on Active and Passive Voice.

The Department of Education mentioned that the MELCs are arranged in a list based on cognitive demand which makes way for better curriculum flexibility as teachers are able to freely integrate LCs without the restrictions of horizontal alignment. Relative to this, the schedule and time allotment of LCs in quarters are suggestive in nature. What is required, however, is that the list of competencies is achieved in the specified grade level (DepEd Commons, 2020). This supports the suggestion that the educators must be given autonomy towards the arrangement of topics. Educators are considered to be adept in their area of specialization, this empowers teachers to decide with regard to the arrangement of lessons based on their experiences and knowledge.

The need for materials to establish a clear and sensible relationship with each other can never be trivialized. In this case, it is vital to note that tampering or changing learning

competencies isn't what is encouraged; rather the arrangement of these competencies must be thoroughly examined to highlight that lessons that require prerequisites must be placed after their supposed prerequisites – promoting a smooth and logical flow of learning. In addition, the logical flow of lessons enables the learner to see the connection between two remotely separated topics.

Accordingly, these findings imply that the produced and distributed learning resource contain necessary parts and contents that helps the development of the students in a self-paced learning, thus, allowing them to navigate through the learning materials freely and confidently. However, the results also reveal that the learning resource does not cater the needs of the slow-progressive learners as it assumes established prior knowledge and mastery of the subject matters from the previous grade levels.

Instructional Quality

In the context of Self-Learning Modules, Instructional Quality chiefly refers to the accuracy and susceptibility of the content and language (technical aspect) being displayed in the learning materials. Following DepEd's standards, Instructional Quality covers many crucial subcomponents that make a learning material of excellent quality, considering their social, grammatical, and factual desirability. In this research, Instructional Quality is employed as a key variable and indicator of a successful learning resource; it includes content and information accuracy and timeliness, the absence of social content violations, and grammatical, computational, and factual errors (DepEd, 2021).

People nowadays are having difficulty in discerning facts from false information. Media and Information Literacy, as part of the school curriculum, values the importance of critical evaluation of media and information in promoting authentic learning. Furthermore, parallel to the system of production and consumption of SLMs, education stakeholders should also become information literate to uphold competent production and responsible usage of the media and information resources. Consequently, the accuracy, timeliness, and relatedness of the information presented in the learning resources augment the student's knowledge about the certain subject matter. Indeed, John F. Kennedy's words can

substantiate this notion by saying, "The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth.

Quality has been one of the driving factors that made the creation of Self-Learning Modules more rigorous, especially in the midst of a devastating pandemic. The Department of Education remains firm in its belief that quality education must never be compromised despite a multitude of instructional struggles that may confront them. The importance of quality in instruction cannot be understated; although achieving it in times of a global crisis has become really challenging and painstaking.

Table 4. Strengths and Weaknesses for Instructional Quality

Standards	Percentage (%)	Adjectival Rating
Content and information are accurate.	100%	Highly Strengthened
Content and information are up-to-date.	25%	Slightly Weak
The LR is free from any social content violations.	62.5%	Strengthened
LR is free from factual errors.	87.5	Highly Strengthened
LR is free from grammatical errors.	25%	Slightly Weak
MEAN	60%	Barely strengthened

The mean for Self-Learning Modules' Instructional Quality was interpreted as *Barely Strengthened* wherein accurate information was presented in learning resources to contribute to the development of the students. To substantiate this notion, Nguyen (2018) affirmed that the key to producing an innovative generation is through allowing students to access basic and accurate content; thus, some factual errors in learning resources could possibly lead to ineffectiveness of quality of learning resources and poor academic performance of the students. Despite the premise of DepEd to give students relatable and relevant content, findings revealed that Self-Learning Modules contain outdated contents

that can be improved by searching and determining the most suited discussions for a certain topic.

The very essence of education capitalizes on the principle that the academe continuously improves its knowledge through debunking theories, replacing obsolete information, and correcting erroneous information. Concerning the timeliness of information provided by the learning resources, Key Informants observed that outdated examples and information are being utilized in the SLM, although there are still contents that primarily focus on pandemics. Although outdated contents are still factual, however, it impedes and defeats the purpose of learning. Outdated information may isolate students and may not respond to the inclusive goal of learning. It is extremely crucial for educators to ensure that their students are on the same page when they present lesson examples or any form of content.

The importance of content knowledge along with pedagogy is vital for teachers to master in order to have something to offer to students; thus, the accuracy of content is truly a crucial component of learning. In connection to this, Key Informants affirmed that SLMs contain information that is based on facts and offer learning content that is free from erroneous details. According to the respondents, they usually conduct research to fact-check the contents that SLMs have offered to ensure the quality, reliability, and credibility of the information. Actually, a learning material that is not easy to understand will likely result in high attrition, whilst inaccurate and outdated learning material will not make the learners achieve the intended result.

Also, respondents revealed that grammar issues arise commonly due to typographical errors and unnoticed mistakes, resulting in teachers rechecking the SLMs before distribution.

The correct usage of grammar, particularly spelling issues has been recognized as one of the weaknesses of Self-Learning Modules based on the data findings, this could be a subject for learning resources' usability and credibility to be judged. Poor grammar could be a great manifestation of competence deficits, as well as negative judgments of the

author's writing skills. Thus, in modular distance learning, details written on learning resources are highly crucial because failure to observe the consistency in grammar might misdirect students in learning.

Quality learning material must be simple and understandable in which concepts are self-explanatory requiring minimum assistance from teachers or others. And must be adequate in content and must serve the self-evaluation of the learners. These findings indicate that teachers should check negligence-induced mistakes that are present in SLMs to ensure the quality of learning experiences of the students. Moreover, there is a need for SLM developers to write relatable and latest content to produce active, adaptive, and responsive learners suggesting DepEd's encouragement to hire proficient yet globally-minded individuals to write SLMs that positively respond to the interests of the students.

Assessments

Academic institutions highly value assessment as it has been an integral part of the teaching and learning process wherein learners' learning progress as well as the effectiveness of teaching instructions is being measured. Furthermore, considering the purpose of assessment in learning the need to ensure its effectiveness and uphold its principle is highly important. In Modular Instruction, learning setup and teaching approaches may greatly vary from the perceived traditional form of teaching yet the crucial role of assessments remains to be an integral component of the teaching and learning process. Without sufficient and effective assessments, teachers will have no means of measuring the learning pace and progress of their students; teachers will not have an adequate basis for improving their approaches and it would be very difficult to tell whether learning competencies are achieved within a particular learning endeavor.

The key informants' strengthened impression of assessments can be attributed to the fact that many educators have been trained to craft susceptible assessments for the achievement of learning targets. This is one crucial aspect that helps learners towards the proper attainment of the desired learning competencies and instructional goals.

Table 5. Strengths and Weaknesses for Assessments

Standards / Criterion Items	Percentage (%)	Adjectival Rating
The LR provides useful measures and information that help the teacher evaluate learner’s progress in mastering the target competencies.	75%	Strengthened
Assessments are aligned with the specific objectives and content.	100%	Highly strengthened
The LR provides “self-checks,” ready-made achievement tests, and/or review activities.	50%	Barely Strengthened
The LR provides variety of assessment types.	75%	Strengthened
Assessments have clear demonstration / examples, instructions, and/or rubrics to serve as guide on how these will be used.	75%	Strengthened
Variety of activities within the LR are utilized to ensure active engagement of the learners	75%	Strengthened
MEAN	75%	Strengthened

Misalignment of assessment to specific objectives and bombardment of activities can undermine the motivation and learning of the learners. Thus, it is important for teachers to ensure that the learning gaps are bridged to prevent hindrance to the learner’s progress towards attaining the lesson outcomes. Therefore, alignment of the components such as; Learning Objectives, Assessments, and Instructional Strategies will reinforce and synch each other that will consequently lead to a measurable and attainable classroom assessment. Furthermore, writers must consider the weight of learning materials being distributed; the key informants assert that a lesser number of activities or items in a task are helpful and necessary to improve assessments and decrease student burnout (Adonis, 2020).

To be able to achieve the targeted learning competencies, teachers usually break down the following expected skills, knowledge, and goals into more specific aims called the objectives. Consequently, the significance of setting objectives in every teaching endeavor has been recognized to be effective for students in the fulfillment of student's total learning experience. This proposition can be supported by Deregios et al. (2014), which affirmed that components of Self-Learning Modules should be incorporated for students to be guided on the things that they needed to accomplish.

Furthermore, the assessment in the SLMs have claimed to have catered to the learning needs of the students, however, the key informants noticed that the SLMs did not include or provide “self-checks” which will allow review and immediate feedback to the learners. The respondents said that self-learning modules must have answer keys included in the module because it is, first and foremost, a “self-learning” module. Findings on self-checks are congruent with other schools' divisions. DepEd Tambayan (2021) reported that the DepEd Davao Region produced a Regional Memorandum that clarifies that “Answer Keys” or “*Susi sa Pagwawasto*” of the modules must be attached as part of the learning resources. Aside from this, it is also necessary that modules must consider the accuracy of their key to correction. This supports the view of the Department of Education toward independent learning at a time when in-person classes are inadmissible. In addition, it also upholds the common view that students are responsible for their own learning. Students pacing at their own rate really need to have answer keys that will automatically reveal to them if their learning is accurate.

These findings imply that teachers agree and confidently believe that varied assessments found within the Self-Learning Modules are designed to effectively measure the learner's learning progress only if they are not overwhelmed with a multitude of tasks. Indeed, students can perform objective, subjective and even authentic tasks the module writers have prepared for them, and however, these assessments must not overwhelm the students with a lot of items. These considerations are necessary to maintain their interest and excitement as they go through their learning material.

Readability

Readability has become of great importance to materials especially when education shifted to a new paradigm that challenged everyone in the academe and the society. Comprehensibility of a certain text is determined by readability’s characteristics: the suitability of the text to the readers’ background, their language, and the instructor’s curricular goal; conforming to these promises to clarify its purpose of helping the students of today’s classroom to improve their learning progress.

For Self-Learning Modules that rely heavily on printed texts as means of giving clear instructions, Self-Learning Module writers need to consider the establishment of a connection between their target learners and the actual modules through understandable vocabulary and skillful writing. It primarily dictates if a Self-Learning Module is susceptible to its target learner in terms of its use of language and devices that make any written text comprehensible enough to facilitate meaningful self-paced learning and eventually direct the learners towards the attainment of competencies and objectives.

Table 6. Strengths and Weaknesses for Readability

Standards	Percentage (%)	Adjectival Rating
Vocabulary level is adapted to target users’ experience and understanding.	50%	Barely Strengthened
Length of sentences is suited to the comprehension level of the target user.	50%	Barely Strengthened
Sentences and paragraph structures are varied and appropriate to the target user.	100%	Highly Strengthened
There is logical and smooth flow of ideas within a lesson and from lesson to lesson.	25%	Slightly Weak
There is consistently good use of transition devices to focus on the main topics and signal a change of topic.	100%	Highly Strengthened
Lessons, instructions, exercises, questions, and activities are clear to the target user.	25%	Slightly Weak

MEAN	58.3	Barely Strengthened
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Readability is one of the important aspects of language and grammar that should be considered when crafting modules since it is the ease with which written texts can be understood. Thus, no matter how high the quality of the content, language, and instructional design of the modules, they will be of no use if they are written beyond the learner's readability level (Weng, et al, 2015). As a matter of fact, low readability leads to poor comprehension, so it is necessary to ensure that the readability of the learning materials is pitched at the level of the learners. In other words, Self-Learning modules must contain clear and compelling content, relatively easy to understand. Module developers must be careful with choices of words and language complexity, sentence length, and structure, and coherence and sequence of contents since they contribute to text readability, and eventually, to students' comfortable learning.

The key informants revealed that the Self-Learning Modules comprise suitable and appropriate use of words to the target learners which ensures the quality learning of modules and eventually improves learner's learning performance. Although it is evident that self-learning modules contain strengthened standards of readability, there are still components that the respondents noticed, which fail to be looked into and need improvement such as the inclusion of transition or introductory paragraphs for the materials. Following Meyer's Personalization Theory, students learn best when things are kept informal and lesson discussions are maintained in a conversational tone. The significance of activating prior knowledge and skills for students under modular distance learning cannot be undermined; this can be exemplified through transitional paragraphs.

Education in the Philippines follows spiral learning design - the process wherein discussions and lessons are designed progressively to gradually shift and improve the learnings of students from simple to complex. The lessons, when there is a lack of introductory parts and pre-requisite discussions, will become hard on the part of both teachers and students as this will require numerous adjustments. Even the Self-Learning Modules that have been evaluated have warm-up activities and questions intended to

measure their prior knowledge, suggesting that mind-conditioning and refreshments serve as effective good starters to learn new things.

These findings infer that readability must not be compromised because Self-Learning Modules facilitate self-directed learning, thus, the learning of the learners depends on what they see and understand. It was also found that there are omitted parts that must be the result of the abrupt production of modules. Furthermore, to adhere entirely to the readability standards, the teachers must stoop down to the level of students to ensure appropriate and matched content levels, explore more technical writing techniques and attend more training programs on technical writing to enhance writing skills.

The Alternative Interventions suggested to strengthen the identified weaknesses in the Self-Learning Modules

An Educator's Guide in Enhancing Self-Learning Modules is an offshoot of the researchers' Survey and Key Informants Interview conducted with the key informants hailing from the three secondary school locales managed by the Department of Education – Schools Division office of Legazpi. The Guide Book basically embodies the answers of the seasoned educators and insights of the researchers along the strengths and weaknesses of Self-Learning Modules, particularly the weaknesses and the alternative interventions that may be applied to strengthen them. The Guide Book encourages educators in Modular Distance Learning set up to take part in the active and necessary process of enhancing Self-Learning Modules towards improved learning experiences. Teachers are sometimes called to enhance learning materials, especially those which may not be susceptible to students' abilities. This Guide book exemplifies the rudimentary knowledge and alternative interventions to do in such circumstances.

The Guide Book is motivated by the premise that teachers, as one of the primary receivers of Self-Learning Modules, must practice checking the learning materials – making sure that these confirm the standards set by the Department of Education. The key to an Enhanced Self-Learning Modules is basically having the knowledge of the common areas for concerns and improvement as well as the rudimentary interventions that are

suggested to address them – coming from the practices of experienced teachers and insights of the researchers.

The Department of Education may use the Guide Book by disseminating it to its teachers to help the latter adapt to certain challenges of Modular Instruction. There are several meetings and sessions that schools would implement for teachers to gather around and improve their instruction, school administrators, along with the Department of Education, can help teachers get their copies of the guidebook. It provides a simple question and answer scheme in its discussion to help neophyte teachers enhance language learning materials. The Questions that revolve around a particular aspect of the Self-Learning Modules deal with the variable's definition, importance, common areas for concern, and interventions.

Since Distance Learning modalities have been experienced by the entire academic community on a large-scale implementation, it is likely that education bureaus and institutions would practice remote learning as part of their curriculum. It is with this notion that this guide was developed by the researchers as a part of their goal on enhancing the learning materials previously created by the Department of Education; the knowledge, insights, and experiences of the Key Informants were carefully triangulated and are now poised to be highly beneficial to their colleagues who seek to enhance learning materials and make these relevant to the context and demands of their learners to uphold quality education.

This Guide Book serves as a kit that summarizes and outlines the research-based alternative interventions that English teachers may apply to strengthen the identified weaknesses of Self-Learning Modules on the following components: (a) Intellectual Property Rights Compliance, (b) Learning Competencies, (c) Instructional Design and Organization, (d) Instructional Quality, (e) Assessment, and (f) Readability. It is directed to provide Grade 7 English teachers with the applicable alternative interventions suited to address the most common weaknesses of the learning modules, as observed and experienced by their fellow educators in the Legazpi City Division. The COVID-19 Pandemic induced many changes in society, especially in the educational landscape.

Indeed, it is necessary to help teachers adapt to the drastic changes the pandemic brought to teaching – at least in terms of materials enhancement.

The material provides tips and ways how to improve the concerns of the six primary (6) components of Self-Learning Modules:

1. Self-Learning Modules must include an updated and accurately written Bibliography and/or Reference List to make modules INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS COMPLIANT. Being compliant to Intellectual Property standards enables teachers to set a good example in giving the author due respect and fostering an academic environment that encourages more innovation and creation.
2. Teachers must be able to review the competencies and perform an unpacking for those difficult targets that they believe their learners would not be able to successfully achieve. The second part provides a step-by-step process on the rudiments of unpacking broad LEARNING COMPETENCIES. It is salient to remember that unpacking is a part of an educator's routine in dealing with Self-Learning Modules.
3. A learning module's instructional design refers to its conceptual structure – the skeleton on which its very soul rests on. The third part deals with tips that help educators achieve a logically-sequenced delivery of lessons and inclusion of necessary reviews to have an effective INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND ORGANIZATION – solving confusion, and deficiencies and promoting the use of prerequisite knowledge.
4. Self-Learning Modules must have updated content and correct grammatical construction. With this, the educators are given tips on dealing with obsolete data that contradicts the purpose of learning and emphasizing the crucial role of proofreading. The Self-Learning Modules' failure to satisfy standards related to INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY will most likely lead to potential problems tied with not being able to foster a strong relationship and confidence among its target users.
5. The fifth part deals with concerns on ASSESSMENTS found in Self-Learning Modules specifically about providing accurate and complete Answer Keys and less number of items in a single task. DepEd standards postulate that learning materials must be able to help students acquire essential learning competencies; this goal of learning would not be possible without assessments that would be

responsible and help learners manifest their progress in knowledge acquisition and related skills development.

6. The sixth part focused on strengthening the READABILITY of the learning materials by replacing deep terminologies with those susceptible to the learner's level, providing clear and brief instructions, and appropriate use of transitional devices. Clarity and ease of materials will guide students towards success in a self-learning process.

The Enhanced Self-Learning Modules proposed based on the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluated materials

The Enhanced Self-Learning Modules is an offshoot of the researchers' Survey and Key Informants Interview conducted with the key informants emanating from the three secondary school locales managed by the Department of Education – Schools Division office of Legazpi, as well as the, suggested alternative interventions which strengthened the Self-Learning Modules' identified weaknesses.

Enhanced Self-Learning Modules pertain to the second output of this research endeavor. It is a substitute learning material enhanced by the researchers to address the weaknesses and lapses identified by the key informants. The Enhanced Self-Learning Modules encapsulate the suggested alternative interventions drawn from the research findings – with the aim of facilitating a meaningful and efficient modular learning experience. It is patterned to the original Grade 7 First Quarter Self-Learning Modules in English which have been developed and released by DepEd Regional Office No. V which is no longer used and circulated in the region. The enhanced learning materials retained the identified strengths of the Grade 7 First Quarter modules in English and featured its modified aspects relative to the identified weaknesses based upon a substantial discussion.

The Enhanced Self-Learning Modules may serve as the pedagogical aid of the Department of Education – Regional Office No. V in teaching education amid the pandemic and other national emergencies that would shift the learning paradigm to remote learning. DepEd may be able to utilize the Enhanced version of their Self-Learning Modules to address the needs, situations, and concerns of learners and will cover all the

bases in ensuring that quality basic education is still accessible amid the present threats and inconvenience posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are seven Most Essential Learning Competencies that Grade 7 students need to acquire in the first quarter namely: supply words and/or expressions that complete an analogy; Identify the genre of a material viewed (as a movie clip, trailer, news flash, internet-based program, documentary, video, etc.); Use the passive and active voice meaningfully in varied contexts; Use the past and past perfect tenses correctly in varied contexts; Use direct and reported speech appropriately in varied contexts; Use phrases, clauses, and sentences appropriately and meaningfully; Use the appropriate reading style (scanning, skimming, speed reading, intensive reading, etc.) for one's purpose. This means that there is a total number of seven topics equivalent to seven Self-Learning Modules (each focusing on one competency)

As learning materials continue to be of primary importance in the teaching-learning process, their evaluation was necessary to achieve its primary purpose of improving the learning material and understanding the problems and processes of developing learning materials (Eden, 1984). The evaluation of selected SLMs focused on six factors that the Department of Education has identified in order to ensure the quality of learning materials. These factors include Intellectual Property Rights Compliance, Learning Competencies, Instructional Design and Organization, Instructional Quality, Assessment, and Readability.

The Enhanced Learning Modules consisted of seven (7) lessons with each having a particular competency.

1. The FIRST lesson is on Simple Analogy which aims to help students supply words and/or expressions to complete an analogy.
2. The SECOND lesson is about Types of Viewing Materials that aims to make students identify the genre of a particular material.

3. The THIRD lesson is about the Use of Past and Perfect Tenses that helps students identify the forms of the verb in past and perfect tenses, and use them in sentences correctly.
4. The FOURTH lesson is on Active and Passive Voice that allows the learners to learn how to use them in varied contexts.
5. The FIFTH lesson is on the use of Direct and Reported Speech that allows learners to learn how to use them appropriately in varied contexts.
6. The SIXTH lesson is on the Use of Clauses, Phrases and Sentences that allows students to define, identify and use these correctly.
7. The SEVENTH lesson is about Reading Styles where the learners are expected to learn about scanning, skimming, speed reading and intensive reading.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn based on the foregoing findings of the present study. First, The Quality Assurance team of the Department of Education needs to consider that the creation and validation of Self-Learning Modules must never be rushed nor be made carelessly to uphold quality education. Second, Teachers are irreplaceable; the significance of the teacher's role in remote learning is not limited to merely reproducing, distributing, sorting, and collecting Self-Learning Modules, but rather, it extends to reviewing, checking, and enhancing the learning materials before they are consumed. Finally, Self-Learning Modules can be enhanced through the collaborative efforts of writers, users, and evaluators. Collecting and weighing varied perspectives results in choosing the most applicable intervention to further strengthen learning resources.

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