

Philippines Remote Learning Study

FINDINGS BRIEF #2: TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

About the study

The Remote Learning Study was conducted during the 2020–2021 school year to investigate how mother-tongue-based multilingual education reading instruction proceeded in 20 schools around the country while classrooms were closed. The school head, 2 teachers, and 4 home learning partners from each school in Grades 1 and 3 were interviewed to gain insights on school administration, teaching and learning, and the home environment.

Sample

Data was collected at three time points—November, March and June—from 20 school heads, 37 teachers and 79 parents. Not all respondents were available at each time point. No parents were interviewed in November as recruitment was still underway and only 7 teachers were surveyed. Children were also asked to fill out a literacy assessment worksheet, but very few parents returned this worksheet at each occasion. This is one of seven briefs prepared based on the results of this study. See shared.rti.org for the full series of briefs.

More information

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November 22, 2021

Context

Due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic all schools in the Philippines were closed during the 2020–2021 academic year. What did teachers, school heads, and home learning partners (HLPs) do to ensure continuity of learning during school closures? What teaching and learning materials (TLMs) were used to support early literacy learning, in particular? This brief explores the strategies and adaptations these educational stakeholders made to support at home learning through the use of TLMs and gives recommendations to further improve the use of TLMs as school closures continue.

Using Teaching and Learning Materials

Self-learning modules

When schools closed in 2020, the Department of Education (DepEd) quickly developed a set of most essential learning competencies (MELCs) for the country's curriculum. These MELCs were used to develop printed self-learning modules (SLMs) for learners at home. Survey analysis reveals that these SLMs for reading in mother-tongue languages, Filipino, and English were the primary support used by most schools for remote learning. According to the school heads in our study ($N=20$), 50% of schools used the SLMs as their primary and sole learning delivery modality. Both teachers and school heads found the SLMs to be very helpful. The majority of HLPs in the study ($N=76$) found use of SLMs as a modality to be somewhat effective (65%), while others claimed they were somewhat ineffective (12%) or not at all effective (7%). This may be due to difficulties HLPs had in supporting children, especially if the HLPs lacked strong literacy skills (see *Brief #1: Strategies for Assisting Home Learning Partners*).

Supplementary materials provided by teachers

Teachers were resourceful in gathering and reproducing learning materials for their students that supplemented the SLMs from the DepEd central office, particularly learning activity sheets and leveled readers that came from existing materials in the classroom or personal files. Some teachers also used DepEd Commons or Learning Resources Management and Development System as a toolbox of curated and quality-assured learning materials. This was a challenge for others, though, due to difficulties accessing the Internet (see *Brief #3: Use of Technology*).

Similar to the teachers, most HLPs stated that they had enough resources in mother tongues, Filipino, and English to support learning at home. Eighty-three percent of HLPs ($N=76$) agreed or strongly agreed that their children had the TLMs needed to learn mother-tongue languages while 87% stated the same for Filipino and 80% for English. Additionally, HLPs stated they used the SLMs the most, followed by the learning activity sheets and the leveled readers provided by the school.

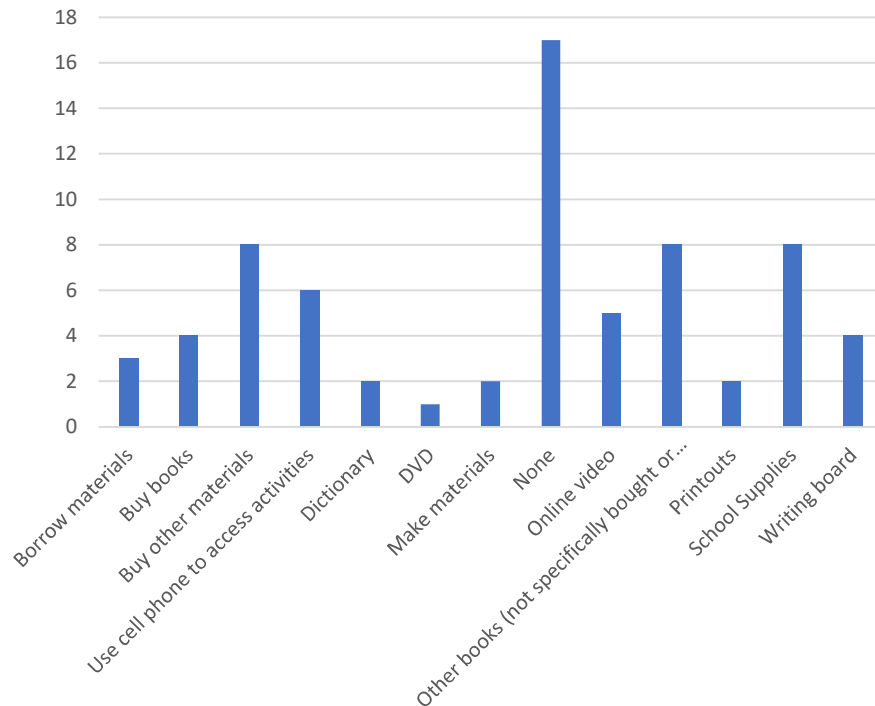
Supplementary resources provided by the family

At mid-year, when asked if they used any other resources not provided by the school, 17 HLPs stated that they only had the SLMs and nothing else. On the other hand, 42 HLPs described ways that they created, borrowed, found or bought other

“Aside from the modules and the aforementioned video calls by the teacher, we have our own story books. I encourage them to read and draw from time to time instead of them just playing outside. Sometimes I notice that they role play as teacher and student.” (HLP)

resources such as alphabet charts, flash cards, chalk, drawing materials, notebooks, small blackboards, manila paper, and DVDs. Figure 1 below shows the answers HLPs provided during interviews. It shows that many parents spent household resources to support children’s learning, encouraged reading beyond what the school provides, and used cellphones and the internet to access supplementary activities or videos.

Figure 1: Other materials used outside of what school provided (HLP responses) N=59



This shows resourcefulness, on the one hand; but it also highlights how remote learning may widen the inequality gap for families who do not have the resources or skills to access supplemental resources for their children. It also suggests that resources found outside of the school may be more intuitive or engaging than what the school provides in the form of SLMs. This is unsurprising, since many commercial or internet resources were designed specifically for use in the home or in the absence of a teacher.

Example Practice

WHAT: The “PIVOT 4A” Learner’s Materials developed by DepEd CALABARZON were a simplified version of the central office’s original SLMs. The content was unpacked into a more open layout, self-assessment tasks, and easier learning activities suited to the learner. Aside from it being conducive to learning at home, the PIVOT 4A was less bulky, too. A module good for a week had 38 pages, but the same number of pages was already good for a whole quarter in PIVOT 4A.

WHY: Teachers reported that the original SLMs were too difficult, contained too many activities, and were not differentiated to learner needs. They found ways to reduce, adapt, and be more flexible in helping students get the work done.

Challenges with Using Teaching and Learning Materials

The SLMs are especially important for families that have little or no access to technology for remote learning. Although most teachers and HLPs found the DepEd materials useful and beneficial, they also commented about the **limitations**

“A typical module now has 1–3 activities in one subject and lesson explanations.” (Teacher)

“We saw in the modules there are many activities that are too hard for the parents. They struggled with teaching their child. We replace the difficult activities with something that is not difficult for them to teach.” (Teacher)

“The modules are all the same for all children.... we need to simplify for the slow learners...the content is difficult...” (Teacher)

of using printed materials, particularly regarding the use and distribution of these materials.

School heads, teachers, and HLPs noted that the SLMs were **too lengthy**. Many teachers and administrators commented that they had to spend a considerable amount of time and funding on downloading, printing, and distributing these modules. School heads sought ways to obtain printers, copiers, bond paper, and ink cartridges. For some schools in far flung areas, fixing hardware and replenishing supplies were challenges as well.

The number of pages was a critical factor in motivating both students and HLPs in studying and answering modules. In the first few weeks of the school year, it was overwhelming for the parents to bring home bundles, and even reams, of paper. Seeing volumes of paper for student work added to the worries of HLPs and their discomfort with the change from school to home learning. **Translating SLMs into appropriate mother-tongue languages** also took up a considerable amount of time. Some teachers also noted that the modules were too challenging for students and not easily adaptable for different learner needs. However, the emerging findings of this study indicate that teachers, school heads, HLPs, and communities did their best to adapt and work on changing and adapting TLMs to suit the needs of their students and contexts (see example at left).

To address the challenge of lengthy modules, teachers started to decrease the activities in the modules or the number of subjects per day and reduce redundant activities after the first quarter.

Recommendations

- To support children’s multiliteracy development, parents may need simple reference materials like dictionaries if they are not fluent speakers of the languages (especially English).
- All families should have sufficient school supplies, including writing boards (blackboards, white boards). Inequities are apparent when it comes to technology (devices and connectivity), but this study also revealed that even basic school supplies and learning resources are not available to all.
- Home learning partners need more orientation sessions on how to use the self-learning modules. (See also Brief #1 for more information about how HLPs have been supported).
- Increase access to libraries, and mobile libraries for remote areas where families can borrow books and other learning materials, or access the internet for downloadable activities.
- Many parents are resourceful finding supplementary resources online or in bookstores. Schools and teachers should leverage this curiosity and ability to draw attention to quality controlled and curated resources. Importantly, teachers need to be given the flexibility to deviate from the strict curriculum when printed modules are delayed, are too difficult for HLPs to support, or when children are losing motivation or have differing needs.