Inquiry on the Use of Flexible Learning as Instructional Approach: The Camarines Norte State College Experience

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Abstract

This qualitative case study aimed to identify the experiences of students, faculty, and administration of Camarines Norte State College on the use of Flexible Learning as an instructional approach. It specifically delved into the (1) issues and concerns encountered on the use of flexible learning; (2) strategies on how the issues and concerns were addressed; (3) insights gained from the use of flexible learning; and (4) intervention plan that could be proposed to enhance the use of flexible learning. Thus, the challenges that the participants experienced, strategies for coping, and insights gained were observed. The ideas of the study were gleaned through social constructivism, flexible learning delivery, and learning management theories. There were 12 participants selected through a purposive sampling technique composed of three (3) students, five (5) faculty, and four (4) administrators. The students were from the federated Union of Supreme Student Government (USSG) while the faculty represented the Federated Faculty Association, with the administrators coming from the top echelon. The data were gathered through the use of separate Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). After the FGD, the responses were transcribed, coded, and presented by themes. As to the issues and concerns encountered on the use of Flexible Learning, Poor internet connectivity, Struggle in the use of online platforms, Inadequate gadgets to use, Inconvenience caused by different proclamations to mitigate COVID-19, Inefficient delivery of modules, Dissatisfaction with synchronous or asynchronous mode only, Dissatisfaction with grades received, and Difficulty in the use of CNSC Learning Management System (LMS) were the experiences cited by the participants. To address the issues and concerns on flexible learning, they were able to cope by Availing of strong wi-fi connection, Familiarization with online platforms, Scheduling of both synchronous and asynchronous classes, Taking the initiative to speed up the delivery and return of modules, communicating with the concerned faculty, seeking assistance to have gadgets, and being resourceful. The participants cited Challenging, Meaningful, and Brought Out the Best in Everyone as insights that they gained on the use of flexible learning. The results were essential to students, faculty, and academic heads to give awareness and create best practices that would provide a quality education through online learning.

Keywords: Flexible learning, education, instructional approach, pandemic, Camarines Norte

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been beset by the effects of COVID-19 19 which has put the education sector in a different scenario. At the onset of the pandemic in the Philippines in March 2020,

the 2nd semester of the academic year has not ended yet. Because social gatherings would cause the spread of the virus, Pres. Rodrigo R. Duterte issued Proclamation No. 922 s. 2020 "Declaring a State of Public Health Emergency throughout the Philippines." Thus, health protocols have to be observed, prohibiting students, and faculty from meeting face-to-face.

It was such an unthinkable experience for people as they have had 360 degrees change in lifestyle, for how could anyone survive in a world where everyone was locked up in a place where the majority did not have enough resources to sustain their day-to-day existence? This was a big blow to the academic institutions as no one had gotten used to the online teaching and learning process. The majority, if not all had to swim on their own notwithstanding the rudiments of conducting online classes. The faculty had to resort to availing of what platform they saw on social media so that they could manage to get through the challenges they met in delivering the lessons to the students.

By the same token, the students had their own experiences of what Covid 19 pandemic had brought to their academic life especially since the majority of them were not economically sufficient to finance what it took to be in an online class modality. Despite the odds, the faculty, and the students forced themselves to adapt to the new normal to facilitate the continuous flow of the exchange of ideas, so as not to disrupt the academic requirements to finish the semester.

Executive Secretary Salvador C. Medialdea issued a Memorandum circular on Stringent Social Distancing Measures and Further Guidelines for the Management of the COVID-19 Situation on March 13, 2020. Thus, the learning process was through online classes to the detriment of a large number of students who were not equipped with gadgets and internet connectivity.

For this matter, Camarines Norte State College (CNSC) in its attempt to end the semester resorted to Blended Learning which finally evolved into Flexible Learning focusing more on online classes because of General Community Quarantine (GCQ), preventing people to go out of their places due to lockdown in their respective areas. This caused a lot of anxiety to everyone, especially the members of the academe. The administrators were then caught unprepared to handle the situation. Just like the faculty, and the students, they, too had their own share of issues and concerns wherein their managerial skills were indeed put to a test for them to be in control of the situation.

In March 2020 upon the declaration of a General Community Quarantine (GCQ), there was a clamour from students to end the semester by giving Passed or Failed as grade wherein some HEIs heeded this call, but not in the case of CNSC. The administration, in consultation with faculty and students through their representatives opted to continue with the semester, giving them the grade that they actually incurred against the indignation of some militant students. The administration remained unfazed by this outpour of sentiments with their guiding light that this decision would prevent them from future problems when it came to computation of grades for Latin Honors, and for those who were on scholarships. They did not succumb to the pressure of the militant students to do what other HEIs had done to end the semester abruptly. Despite all these challenges, the faculty were able to do all the necessary measures to end the semester right which in turn was appreciated by the students especially those who were vying for Latin Honors, and those scholars in which one of the requirements for them to continue the support of their benefactors was to maintain a particular Grade Point Average.

Camarines Norte State College (CNSC), guided by the issuance of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Advisory No. 3 on March 11, 2020 titled Guidelines for the Prevention, Control, and Mitigation of the Spread of the CoViD 19 in HEIs had to exhaust all the efforts to extend to the students all means

of delivery of the lessons using Flexible Learning which could involve modules or learning materials, or online classes which could either be synchronous or asynchronous.

For that matter, CNSC once again responded to the call of CHED through the issuance of Admin Memo No. 019 s. 2020 regarding Guidelines for CNSC Employees that "(1) Faculty Members shall adopt the Special Academic Contingency Arrangement to Shift to Blended and Online Learning." (2) Faculty members may opt to use Facebook or Messenger group chat (GC) or any other platforms that may facilitate the continuity of instruction. (3) Faculty members who do not know how to use the available platforms may seek the assistance and help of MIS Office to set up their social media accounts, and (4) Learning materials may be distributed at predetermined or designated places accessible to students.

With the issuance of this memo, the faculty had exhausted all means to provide quality education to the students amidst pandemic by using the worldwide web platforms via Messenger or Facebook in facilitating communication with the learners. Teleconferencing applications such as Zoom, and Google Meet had been used to conduct online classes while modules or learning materials were provided to the students who did not have the resources to participate in online classes.

It had been a struggle for the majority of faculty conducting classes online especially those subjects which needed actual performance such as actual demonstration of work in cooking, and sports. The faculty needed to strategize and think out of the box to come up with good results. By this method, the students unleashed their creativity and were able to come up with videos of their groups despite the distance while the faculty had become more technologically adept in their drive to keep pace with the demands of the time.

In the beginning of the community quarantine, blended learning became the by-word in the academe, then it had evolved in the term called Flexible Learning. CNSC adapted the term and ventured into Flexible Learning. This mode exhausted all possible means to provide quality education which was geared towards achieving the "no student left behind' concept as flexibility and adjustments had to be extended by the faculty, as well as assistance needed to the students in order for them to keep abreast with the activities that the class was tasked to do.

Flexible Learning (FL), in the context of CNSC is an instructional approach basically online mode which could either be synchronous or asynchronous or could be both. It could also be offline which uses learning materials or modules for those who could not join the virtual class due to the absence of resources. This approach is the embodiment of flexibility in the truest sense of the word as faculty should adjust their strategies, and regulations in the conduct of classes to guide and motivate the learners to push thru their education despite the difficulties that they had been experiencing with regard to their academic life. The faculty had been flexible to them accommodating the submission of requirements even beyond the due dates. They were instructed by the administration to extend all the adjustments and understanding that they could extend to the students. They should be asked also as to the particular mode that they could afford to attend which could be online or offline.

The online mode could be synchronous or asynchronous wherein the former happens in real time when students could interact virtually with their professors through the use of applications such as Google Meet, Zoom, or other teleconferencing platforms. Those students who have good internet connection simultaneous with their class could join in the synchronous class modality. Synchronous is the mode wherein the faculty and students can communicate virtually at a particular given time wherein they could have interaction when the faculty could give their answers outright to the queries or clarifications of the

students. It is the mode wherein faculty could use a web-teleconferencing software such as Zoom or Google Meet to conduct classes using any available gadget such as a laptop, tablet, or cellular phone.

On the other hand, asynchronous learning happens when the faculty and the students can do the work separately at their own pace and time. The faculty uploads videos and other learning materials for students to study and accomplish the activities that they have to accomplish. This is the mode preferred by some as they could do their activities at their most convenient time, especially when the internet connection is strong in the area. In this modality, students could access the lessons depending on their availability to do the activities uploaded by the faculty in the CNSC Learning Management System (LMS) or Google Classroom for them to do. They do not see the instructors virtually. The faculty uploads or sends the activities to the LMS for the students to do, who in turn submit the work done to the same platform.

Other social media platforms that could be used in the delivery of online lessons are Facebook, Messenger, and YouTube. Videos on YouTube are an important component due to informative materials that are uploaded to this platform. Strong internet connectivity and an electronic gadget such as a laptop or Smartphone are indispensable. Consequently, those who did not have such resources opted to do it the modular way wherein printed materials were prepared by the instructors and delivered to the students. There were activities that the students should accomplish. Providing modules or learning materials to the students who could not attend online learning because of the unavailability of gadgets to use, and/or the absence of an internet connection is also part of flexible learning.

Since there were students who preferred to use learning materials or modules, thus offline mode, the institution signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Local Government Units (LGUs) for easier delivery of modules to the students who were living in far places, for the adult representatives of the students to pick up the materials from a particular LGU, considering the health protocol issued by IATF prohibiting a minor from going out. The institution, truly living up to its desire to reach out to the poor and underprivileged students, did all the possible means to make sure that due consideration was given to them, and that the pandemic was not a hindrance to finishing their studies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought companies to check on their social concern. In support of the government's effort to prepare the stakeholders to equip themselves on how to do online classes, various book companies and other organizations sponsored free webinars. YouTube, Facebook Live, and other social media platforms were used in conducting webinars to capacitate them in doing the online class. The faculty of CNSC took advantage of these innovations and equipped themselves with different ideas on how to facilitate online classes.

There were various Learning Management Systems (LMS) that were introduced on different social media platforms. For this matter, CNSC, through the Management Information System (MIS) think tanks created its own LMS for the use of the stakeholders of the institution. Flexible learning is not purely online mode as it also utilizes modules wherein instructors strategize ways how to reach and connect to their students. CNSC, as a pioneer in the Bicol Region on the use of LMS helped other State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to set up their own system. This effort was extended to other private institutions as well. Various social media platforms helped the faculty in conducting the delivery of the lesson. Each platform has its own uses, from uploading announcements to holding synchronous discussions. Facebook page could be used by instructors to post announcements, and updates, and encourage participation of the students in the class interaction. They could also make Facebook groups, and streamline Live lectures, upload interactive questions, and make announcement for their classes.

Embracing the different platforms gives more benefit to those who have good internet connectivity. Twitter could be used by the instructors as vehicle for a class message board to post reminders for homework, deadlines, and inspirational quotes. Instagram could be used by students as an avenue to showcase their outputs such as photographs or graphics more creatively. Students could digitally create storytelling. Instructors could make a class blog through the use of other platforms such as WordPress, Squarespace, Wix, Blogger, Tumblr, or Medium.

To provide more information, and to keep abreast with the modern times, CNSC has subscribed to e-books such as GVRL, Elsevier Science Direct, and Access Engineering for e-journals like Infotrac 250, and magazines and newspapers like Pressreader. In this regard, stakeholders are encouraged to surf, and nourish their minds using the facility, such that those who have no access code could request via FB from the CNSC College Librarian (CNSC Admin Memo No. 019 s. 2020 Strategies for the Special Academic Contingency Arrangement Plan).

As this is a new experience for everyone, especially during the time that no one has ever prepared for what is in store for each of them, the experiences of the stakeholders are such a good story to write. It is then the desire of the researcher to make a narrative to document how Camarines Norte State College lived and survived the academic life during the time of Covid 19 pandemic.

Statement of the Problem

The study inquired about the use of flexible learning as an instructional approach. This also delved into the experiences of the stakeholders of Camarines Norte State College. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the issues and concerns encountered on the use of

Flexible Learning as experienced by:

a. Students

b. Faculty

c. Administrators?

2. What are the strategies used to address the issues and concerns encountered on the use of flexible learning as experienced by the three (3) groups of respondents?

3. What insights could be gained on the use of flexible learning by the three (3) groups of respondents?

4. What intervention plan can be proposed to enhance the use of Flexible Learning in CNSC?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This research delved into the inquiry on the experiences of the students and faculty in the teaching and learning process using flexible learning as an instructional approach in Camarines Norte State College (CNSC). This research dealt with the issues and concerns that the students, faculty, and administrators experienced amid the pandemic, how they addressed those issues and concerns that they experienced, and the insights that they gained from the experiences that they had. This investigated further how the administration handled the situation during Covid 19 pandemic in facilitating the delivery of quality instruction but delimited to the effectiveness of the use of flexible learning.

The locale of the study is CNSC which has various delivery units such as Entienza Campus, Panganiban Campus (CoTT), Labo Campus (CANR), Mercedes Campus (IFMS), College of Education (Abańo Campus), and the Main Campus which houses the CAS, CBPA, ICT, and CoEng. Being qualitative, there were minimal participants identified through the commonality or similarities of their profiles. Five faculty were from the Federated Faculty Association (FFA), 3 students from Union of Supreme Student

Council (USSG), and 4 Administrators to represent the administration. The social impact to the lives of the participants on the use of flexible learning is not covered by this study.

Significance of the Study

The researcher believes that the result of this study is of great importance to the following:

CNSC. The implication of this study will help the institution gain the necessary information on the status of the conduct of flexible learning to take the necessary measures to enhance the system and obtain better results. Furthermore, the intervention plan as the output of this research could pave the way to enhanced implementation of flexible learning. Having logistics in place could give signal to the stakeholders that the institution is always ready to face academic challenges.

CHED. The findings of this study could help the agency formulate policies or measures that could enhance the use of flexible learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as an instructional approach. Moreover, the result could give them an idea to do the necessary precautions. Conceptualizations or adoption of necessary measures could be done to better prepare HEIs in facing difficulties.

Students. The outcome of this study could benefit them as their narration of experiences could give other stakeholders such as the faculty to improve on their craft using flexible learning. It could also be for the administration to take heed of the recommendations that spring out of these experiences. It could also make them realize that flexible learning has positive impact in their studies. Faculty. The result of this study could lead them find and try other strategies and more interactive activities to enliven their discussion. It could also motivate their students to appreciate the delivery of every lesson despite the odds. The result of this study could have positive impact on the way they conduct their classes.

Administrators. The result of this study could be the basis of enhancing the curriculum which is adaptable to flexible learning mode. This could also prompt them to embrace flexible learning and see the positive impact of the approach. This may also be a way for them to motivate the faculty to increase productivity with the use of online learning.

Community. The result of this study would make the community embrace flexible learning as an instructional approach and appreciate the new normal way in education. This could also make positive changes on the way they would take the new normal way of education. Furthermore, it could open additional business for their constituents due to the demand for the use of internet and technology.

Curriculum Planner. The outcome of this study could help them identify measures to implement changes in enhancing the curriculum. Moreover, they would get used to the effects of flexible learning which could bring innovation in the instructional approach. They may implement positive changes in enhancing the curriculum.

The result of this study will enable the Graduate School faculty to practice flexible learning in the delivery of the exchange of teaching and learning processes. The administration will be more open to accepting different modes of flexible learning in carrying out their task. Further, they may come to the realization that flexible learning is the new normal which may never go back to the traditional way alone.

Future Researchers. This study will serve as a helpful reference in the conduct of their research. Corollary to this, they would benefit from this output as they could have another sample of the rudiments of qualitative research. They would learn to appreciate the beauty of this kind of research over quantitative studies.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter presents the selected literature and studies related to the research work. Other information gathered is from books, journals, electronic sources, and results of studies by previous researchers. These readings give the researcher a clearer understanding and assessment of what has to be done to carry out this study effectively.

Flexible Learning

The Handbook on Facilitating Flexible Learning During Educational Disruption: The Chinese Experience in Maintaining Undisrupted Learning in COVID-19 Outbreak written by Huang et al. (2020) bears measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Since activities were banned even the handling of face-to-face classes during this time, the Chinese Ministry of Education initiated a drive entitled "Disrupted Classes, Undisrupted Learning" to facilitate teaching and learning process using flexible learning in the midst of COVID 19. It is also stated in the book the measures participated in by among the government and other sectors such as telecommunication, enterprise, and the like to be used during pandemic or other related event so as to secure continuous flow of education without being prevented from having one.

The work of Khan (2007) entitled Flexible Learning in an Information Society used flexible learning which consists of eight indicators such as institutional, management, technological, pedagogical, ethical, interface design, resource support, and evaluation. Understanding these factors could lead to better use of flexible learning situations, and better guidance to go through with it. Literature from local authors was presented to provide insights and discussions relevant to the current study.

In the article written by Trevitt (2011) titled Universities Learning to learn? inventing flexible (E) learning through first and second-order action research, they believed that there had been a need to improve the curriculums. They also believed that curriculums had to adapt to flexible learning. This needed the expertise of curriculum planners, in collaboration with the stakeholders to get the expected result.

In the book review made by Willems, J. (2007) titled Flexible Learning: Implications of "whenever", "where-ever," and "what-ever", she defined flexible learning in so many ways. It was also used metaphorically. She inferred that flexibility is more learner centered. She believed that students have the right to how they would like their learning to transpire.

Bacak, J. et al. (2021) on Moving from Levels of Inquiry to the Flexible Phases of Inquiry Theory: A Literature Review of Inquiry-Based Teacher Education tackled the students' learning by making inquiries and getting information by themselves. By doing so, they learn more through discovery. Pre-service teachers are given the chance to observe how the learners acquire knowledge through inquiry-based method.

Tucker, S. et al. (2012) on Flexible Learning Environments dealt with the importance of knowing the theories and frameworks to be applied in a flexible learning surrounding. It tackled the main principles of such modality. It also posited the relevance of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, and the impact of technology in this kind of modality.

The focus of the work of Garrison, R. (2009) on Communities of Inquiry in Online Learning is providing an overview of the framework. This highlights the importance of social, cognitive, and teaching presence. Such a concept is utilized to guide the delivery of online experiences.

The article of Bridgland, A. and Blanchard, P. (2001) on Flexible Delivery/Flexible Learning…Does it Make a Difference? tackled the principle of learner-centered teaching. It was compared to the old-school

way of conducting the delivery of lessons. It also highlighted the flexible learning mode using the case study method. In the article written by Evenhouse, D. and Zadoks, A. (2018) on Video coding of classroom observations for research and instructional support in an innovative learning environment, they stated that it has become a tool for evaluation. Moreover, it becomes a research instrument for coding video-recorded meetings in a collaborative environment. In doing so, the researchers will be able to describe the true picture of the study.

Collis, B. and Moonen, J. (2010) wrote an article entitled Flexible Learning in a Digital World wherein it identifies the implication that technology brings due to digitalization. It is about the changes in the pursuit of knowledge. Moreover, the flexible learning modality becomes their unifying factor. Loon, M. (2022) in his blog titled Flexible learning: a literature review 2016-2021 posited that flexible learning is not a new phenomenon. This literature review gave the readers a lot of information on what flexible learning is. The participants in the reviewed articles came from 28 countries. The papers were thematically analyzed which revealed diverse reasons for adopting flexible learning.

In the blog of Taylor, J. (2020) titled Online Distance Learning: A Literature Review, various key terms were defined to differentiate one from the other. It also stated that some found the efficacy of online distance learning was not that much as compared to the traditional way. On the other hand, there were also some findings that online learning was no different from those of face-to-face programs.

Distance Learning

In the article written by Veletsianos (2019) on Analysis of Flexible Learning and Flexibility over the last 40 years of Distance Education, he reported several themes that come out of flexible learning. He mentioned on the advantages and disadvantages met using the said modality. Sabio, R. et al. (2013) on Current Challenges and Prospects facing Distance Education in the Philippines, it stated the different challenges met by the academe in today's advancement in technology. These issues have something to do with distance learning. Open University has become an option for those who advocate flexible learning.

State of Public Health Emergency

In the onset of the pandemic, the President of the country had issued Proclamation No. 922 s. 2020 "Declaring a State of Public Health Emergency throughout the Philippines," thus health protocol was observed. This hindered the students and faculty from meeting face-to-face. Another memorandum from the Office of the President was signed on March 13, 2020, on "Stringent Social Distancing Measures and Further Guidelines for the Management of the CoViD 19 Situation" providing adequate arrangements to allow the students to continue fulfilling their requirements during the indicated period."

CHED issued Advisory No. 3 on March 11, 2020, stating the Guidelines for the Prevention, Control, and Mitigation of the spread of the CoViD 19 in HEIs to "Deploy available distance learning, e-learning, and other alternative modes of delivery instead of residential learning if they have the resources to do so."

Camarines Norte State College (CNSC) issued Admin Memo No. 019 s. 2020 regarding Additional Guidelines for CNSC Employees during the State of Public Health Emergency for Teaching Personnel that "Faculty Members shall adopt the Special Academic Contingency Arrangement to Shift to Blended and Online Learning.

Use of Learning Management System

CNSC had issued another Admin Order No. 61 s. 2020 stating the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of CNSC Learning Continuity Plan for First Semester AY 2020-2021 adapting the flexible learning principle and may consider synchronous or asynchronous teaching strategies or both. It further

states that the CNSC Learning Management System (LMS) is the primary course management system that shall be used in the delivery of instruction. Other platforms such as Google Classroom may be utilized. However, all contents and activities must be reflected in the CNSC LMS. Similarly, those who will be adapting the modular approach in their courses must have this reflected in the CNSC LMS for monitoring purposes.

The work of Govender, I. et al. (2023) on Constructivist Approach to a Programming Course: Students' Responses to the Use of a Learning Management System posited that the learners found it a challenge. Just like in problem-solving, the faculty agreed that face-to-face is really important in achieving the desired skills. However, they also believe in the importance of LMS in conducting activities online.

Related Studies

Reading the works of diverse authors made the researcher gain valuable insights, concepts, and ideas in the conduct of her study. Below were varied researches that delved on the use of flexible learning as instructional approach providing relevant findings that have enriched the present research.

Flexible Learning

Grampil (2022) in her study on the Effectiveness of Flexible Learning on the Academic Performance of Students. She conducted it with learners in aviation electronics technology to find out if there was a significant difference in their academic performance between the traditional and flexible learning modalities. They found out that there is a significant difference on flexible learning as their GWA increased as compared to traditional mode.

Muller, C. and Mildenberger T. (2021) in their work Facilitating flexible learning by replacing classroom time with an online learning environment: A systematic review of blended learning in higher education investigated on the impact of replacing classroom time with an online learning environment. Results suggest overall differences between blended and traditional classroom learning were very small negative or have moderate positive effects. This reveals that in spite of lessening the classroom time between 30 and 79 per cent, the learning outcomes were satisfied. Corollary to this, reducing the classroom time in blended learning is not more or less effective than conventional classroom learning.

The Flexible Learning Adaptabilities in the New Normal: E-Learning Resources, Digital Meeting Platforms, Online Learning Systems and Learning Engagement which is the work of Santiago, C.S. et al. (2021) tackled about how Covid 19 pandemic shifted traditional learning to flexible learning. In this study, they described Flexible Learning as used in Cavite State University-Silang Campus as the combination of online, offline, or blended modes with the use of technology, so as to facilitate the exchange of information in the conduct of teaching and learning process. The respondents were identified using stratified random sampling, having 364 students from four departments. A structured questionnaire was sent online using Google form. The results indicated that smartphones and mobile applications were the educational tools mostly used.

It further indicated that Google Meet was the preferred platform used in synchronous meetings while Google Classroom was mostly used during asynchronous classes. Facebook was the top choice as the most convenient to use during flexible learning, followed by Google, and Zoom. It was revealed that being prepared was the most vital in the conduct of online learning and that creating content tailored to the needs of the students would strengthen the delivery of the online mode of the teaching and learning process.

The study by Abenes and Caballes (2020) on the Readiness of Tertiary Students in the Flexible Learning Approach was done to assess the capability of the students of the College of Education to adapt

to the new normal using the Flexible Learning Approach. The result of the study served as the basis of the administration in giving the teaching load of the faculty, as well as the class schedules, and programs to adapt to the new normal through the use of flexible learning mode.

This study used mixed methods using quantitative and qualitative methods. It revealed that there was a high percentage of students who did not pursue their education against pandemic due to financial constraint, and safety precautions. Nevertheless, majority still were able to push thru with their studies since the tuition and miscellaneous fees were free of charge.

The study of Abisado et al. (2020) titled A Flexible Learning Framework Implementing Asynchronous Course Delivery for Philippine Local Colleges and Universities deals with formulating a framework for higher education for the implementation of flexible learning modality. It lays down the details on the conduct of asynchronous classes when it comes to syllabi, the schedule of virtual and in-person meetings, and adaptability to the use of technology.

The Pamantasan ng Cabuyao (PNC) which has been operating for almost two (2) decades using traditional ways in education opened its horizon with the opportunity to adapt to the new normal by embracing flexible learning modality to be used in the conduct of teaching and learning process. The institution knew that flexible learning is more of a challenge, and that accessibility was a concern due to internet connectivity. There are many ways to conduct flexible learning modality which can be full-online, blended learning, flipped classroom, and distance learning.

The study used the flexible learning framework using asynchronous course delivery for local higher educational institutions. In the formulation of the framework, the data of the faculty and students were used. The design of outcomes-based teaching and learning plan, course materials, scheduled on-line and face-to-face meetings, technology, and center for technology education are embodied in the asynchronous course delivery.

Houlden and Veletsianos (2020) in their work "The Problem with Flexible Learning: neoliberalism, freedom, and learner subjectivities" examined the claim that there is freedom in using flexible education. Although they agree that the use of flexible learning is liberatory in some sense especially on the liberty of time to do it in your time and pace, the other side of it such as the economic or logistic reasons, and the consequent effects on subjectivity of learning were not that considered. This research finds that for flexible education to be more beneficial to the learners, normative forms of freedom must be deliberated, and historicized to back up this endeavor.

Dayagbil et al. (2021) in their research Teaching and Learning Continuity Amid and Beyond the Pandemic worked on the challenges and issues in teaching and learning continuity in public higher education in the Philippines due to Covid 19 scare. It used the exploratory mixed-method triangulation design, and evaluated the data from students and faculty. It was found out that adjustments in the teaching and learning design were made by the faculty, and that most of the learners had challenges on on complying with the activities due to limited internet connection. Themes were identified such as trajectory for flexible learning delivery, role of technology, teaching and learning environment, and the prioritization of safety and security.

The work of Agaton and Cueto (2021) on Learning at home: Parents' lived experiences on distance learning during COVID 19 pandemic in the Philippines tackled about the challenges of virtual learning. In his study, modular learning was the answer to that difficulty. It stated the experiences of the parents as to the extent of their participation to the life of their children in their studies on the use of modules such as tutoring their children. The authors made a survey on the parents of the students about their

experiences on pandemic from struggles brought about by the pandemic, and how they viewed the various measures that the government did in order to mitigate the spread of Covid 19 in which they were amenable to. This research came into a policy on education during the occurrence of similar phenomenon.

In the study entitled Flexible Learning as New Learning Design in Classroom Process to Promote Quality Education by Joan, R. (2013), he stated that learners before as compared nowadays are much different. The new generation of learners favor a change in the classroom situation due to their knowledge in gathering information through the use of technology. It also stated the benefits of flexible learning as to its convenience and choice as to how to do a certain activity.

The paper found that flexible learning in the classroom promotes quality education. The researcher used the interview method in gathering data from the students. The researcher used a flexible learning schedule in making a new learning design in the classroom. The idea is for the learners to plan their activities that suit their interest. This results to a pleasant situation to the life of the students.

The study of Tuntirojanawong (2013) on Students' Readiness for E-learning: A Case Study of Sukhothai Thammathirat delved on the graduate students majoring in educational administration readiness for e-learning as to gender, age, and technology experience. The sample population was derived using simple random sampling obtaining 162 graduate students. A rating scale questionnaire with .86 level of reliability was used as research instrument. Percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and ANOVA were used as statistical tools of the study. The research findings showed that (1) the over all of students' readiness for e-learning of graduate students majoring in educational administration were ready status and category that Technology Access had the highest mean and Study skills, Technology skills had the lowest mean.; (2) There was no significant difference of the students' readiness for e-learning of graduate students majoring in educational administration as classified by gender,age groups, and technology experiences. It is recommended that the university should improve graduate students' readiness in Study Skill.

Rasouli et al. (2016) conducted a study on Students' Readiness for E-learning Application in Higher Education as to the readiness of art students in e-learning. This research used the survey research design. The population of the study were the 347 students from three public Iranian universities identified using multi-stage cluster sampling via Morgan Table. A self-developed questionnaire was used as a tool to identify the readiness of the respondents.

The data were analyzed by indexes of descriptive statistics and one sample t-test. It was found that there was a significant relationship between the readiness of undergraduate students, graduate students, and post-graduate students in e-learning, but there was no significant relationship between students' readiness and gender, university, and subject. It was revealed that the level of readiness of Art students was moderate when it comes to applying e-learning.

Muller et al. (2018) on Learning Effectiveness and Students' Perceptions in a Flexible Learning studied the concerns thru the lens of the students. The flexible learning program was used to show the objectives in a blended learning design. The learners' perception of the FLEX learning design was positive. The two groups achieved the same final exam results. The findings were good even though the learners were not given the chance to choose to join or not to join the FLEX group.

The work of Soffer et al. (2019) titled Patterns of Students' Utilization of Flexibility in Online Academic Courses and Their Relation to Course Achievement analyzed how the learners use flexible learning modes and delve into how this relates to differences in the achievement of the course. The population of

the study was 587 learners in four online courses. The study used the Educational Data Mining (EDM) methodology to trace the students' attitudes in the courses and to compute 34 variables. Findings revealed that students had their patterns in using flexibility and that their achievements were significantly related to patterns of learning time and accessibility to learning resources. It also shows that the learners' achievements were significantly related to the pattern of time, and access to learning resources. Knowing the various patterns of the use of flexibility may support the design of personalized learning and increase collaboration among students with similar characteristics.

In the research conducted by Enterprise Marketing & Research Services Pty. Ltd. (2003) for the University of Tasmania, it dealt with the Impact on Students of Flexible Teaching and Learning strategies in connection with access, participation, achievement, and satisfaction. In recent years, the University of Tasmania has been implementing flexible teaching and learning methods and systems. It has made an effort to address the challenges of students whose residences were far from the campuses, the issue of the availability of synchronous and asynchronous, and to address those issues. It also tackled the family and work commitments of the learners.

Smith (2013) in his study entitled Flexible Learning of Problem-Solving Heuristics through Adaptive Search, a learning system design was given as an alternative to greater flexibility. It was applied and presented to the challenge of getting problem-solving heuristics through experience. There were performance results obtained with the system in a poker betting domain reported and compared with those of the investigated learning system in the same domain.

The work of Demetriadis, S. and Pombortsis A. (2007) entitled e-Lectures for Flexible Learning: A Study on their Learning Efficiency dealt with finding the level of students' learning using e-lectures. Two groups of students were given the same learning material wherein the control group participated in a traditional live lecture as compared to the treatment group attending e-lectures with the same content. Both groups were given the same activities. Findings revealed that there were no significant differences during the post-intervention phase, but learners in the e-lecture got a high acquisition of learning. The results meant that students may acquire knowledge efficiently at the introductory level by using e-lecture material.

The work of Thomas (2019) on Neoliberal performance and resistance in Australia's flexible learning sector focused on educational programs that cater to disengaged Australian learners to re-engage in education. It determined the flexible learning practitioner's professional identities, and the ways in which they validate their impact as mentors.

Gibbs and Kyle (n.d.) in their work entitled Completion Rates in Flexible Learning identified the perceived reasons and factors that contributed to the delayed submission of activities, and/or not completing the course of the learners.

The result indicated that there should be better communication between the faculty and the learner. Other respondents asked for an extension of time, so that would be able to give their answers more effectively. It was also recommended that there may be more discussion and follow-up with the topic, to come up with a more effective understanding of the lesson.

The study of Pickering (n.d) on Anatomy Drawing Screencasts Enabling Flexible Learning for Medical Students investigated the aftermath of five anatomy screencasts that produce replica of the anatomy drawing element of a lecture. These were sent via the University's Virtual Learning Environment for the learners to access and use. There was a module questionnaire to find out the impact of the screencasts to the learners' education. The findings stated that there was a high level of usage in various

time and day of the week. The number of usage increased towards the end of the module when assessment was getting nearer.

Brunzell et al. (n.d.) conducted a study on Trauma-Informed Flexible Learning: Classrooms that Strengthen Regulatory Abilities. They explored the implementation of the domains, increasing regulatory abilities, within a trauma-informed positive education (TIPE) approach with flexible learning teachers as they incorporated trauma-informed principles into their daily teaching practice. Their study posited that redressing a trauma-affected student's regulatory abilities must be the premier objective in the developmentally informed TIPE pedagogy. The researchers used qualitative appreciative inquiry action research methodology to delve into the TIPE perspectives with their learners.

The dissertation of Berry (2017) entitled Educational Outcomes of Synchronous and Asynchronous High School Students: A Quantitative Causal-Comparative Study of Online Algebra 1 revealed that there was no difference between synchronous and asynchronous modes as to how learners view transactional distance learning. The paper compared the educational outcome of online Algebra 1 courses to evaluate if a significant difference existed between synchronous and asynchronous learners for the grades, assessment scores, and how learners view their course. Findings revealed that learners who underwent the synchronous mode had significantly lower end-of-course grades and standardized test scores than those who were in asynchronous mode.

The study of Guiamalon et al. (2021) on Teachers' Issues and Concerns on the Use of Modular Learning aimed to find out the issues and concerns of the teachers about the use of Modular Distance Learning Modality. Participants came from ten various public elementary schools. Findings revealed that the teachers are ready to do their work on the use of modular learning in the midst of Covid 19 virus scare. They were well-prepared and armed with trainings and skills for them to do the job more effectively. It found out that the parents of the learners could assist their offspring in the modular mode, but some could not do the assistance due to their difficulty in explaining the modules. It further showed that the schools have given enough funds to facilitate the modular learning.

The findings of the study conducted by Martin (2021) on Adaptability and High School Students' Online Learning During Covid-19: A Job Demands-Resources Perspective revealed that adaptability equated with higher levels of online learning. Self-efficacy in online learning was also highly associated with their achievement. The result affirmed adaptability as an important resource that could assist learners in the online modality including the times of virtual instruction such as during the pandemic.

Mahyoob (2020) in his study on the Challenges of e-learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic Experienced by EFL Learners posited that online learning was the only thing that would best suit to address the pandemic in continuing the classes, especially in higher education. This paper determined the issues, and obstacles confronted by English Language Learners in Science and Arts College, Alula, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia on the second semester of 2020 due to CoVid-19 scare. The study was to investigate the 184 students' experiences in online education and to determine the feasibility of the virtual methods of learning using a questionnaire. It was found out that technical, academic, and communication were the challenges met by online EFL learners. It was stated that they were not satisfied with online learning.

The Challenges of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic encountered by students in Pakistan authored by Abaid et al. (2021) identified the issues and concerns met by Pakistani students during online learning environment identified the differences that existed between males and female learners about the issues and concerns met during the online learning, and to assess the effectiveness of online

learning in Pakistan from learner's viewpoints. The respondents were the 550 learners through the use of simple random sampling, who took online classes in Pakistan. They used cross-sectional and analytic studies.

They made the questionnaire in Google form to collect data. Findings showed that all the learners whether males or females met the same concerns. They met difficulty in accessing good internet connectivity, as well as technical and financial issues in the conduct of online learning.

The paper entitled Flexible Learning and design of Instruction authored by Nikolova, I. and Collis, B. (2002) investigated the challenges in designing flexible learning and instruction, considering how the designer and the learners view it. There was a method for the development of flexible instructional modules to assist the designers in coming up with modules that fit different students' needs, allow the learners to choose the platforms including distance delivery.

In the work of Nguyen (2021) entitled A study on satisfaction of users towards Learning Management System at Vietnam National University HCMC aimed to find out the factors that influence students' satisfaction towards LMS specially Blackboard and Edusoft. These were 2 platforms used by the learners during their college life. This work used a quantitative survey of learners at International University using 4 factors such as announcement system, Instruction information, Interaction, technology quality on LMS usefulness, and the impact of LMS usefulness on their satisfaction. Results showed the impact of those factors on students' satisfaction. This research tested the interaction provided by the learning management tool and learners' satisfaction. On the part of the learners, they ranked the level of the factors as to the difficulty they encountered on the use of LMS.

Higley, M. (2013) in his study entitled Benefits of Synchronous and Asynchronous e-Learning tackled the advantages of using both synchronous and asynchronous technologies in an online class. Expectations and activities in an online mode of learning are the same as in the traditional class. One similarity is that in a synchronous class, interactions like in a face-to-face scenario are expected. Various activities are done in a synchronous class similar to a face-to-face situation. In synchronous online technology, there is videoconferencing, interactive learning models, and telephone conferences, other than the virtual environment, and chat rooms.

In an asynchronous mode, learners use their own time to do the activities, interact with their peers, and provide feedback. It is a more popular type since in this mode, the learners could do the activities in their own pace and time. This study enumerated the different activities that could be done in a synchronous or asynchronous classes. Findings showed that technology could improve learning outcomes, but both modes have strengths and weaknesses, and that the most used platform for synchronous was the Google meet.

The study by Castroverde, F. and Alcala, M. (2021) entitled Modular distance learning modality: Challenges of teachers in teaching amid the Covid-19 pandemic used phenomenological design which was qualitative research. It determined the issues and concerns of mentors in the use of modules amid the pandemic, and how they addressed them. The respondents were ten (10) public secondary teachers in Tacloban City identified through convenience sampling. The study used a survey method specifically a semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. It used Colaizzi's method in the interpretation of data. It was found out that the mentors facilitated different strategies to address the issues and concerns met by the teachers on the use of modular learning which includes time management, innovative teaching strategies, adaptability/equipping oneself with skills to the new normal trend, flexibility, alternative plans, optimism, and patience.

The study on the Effectiveness of an Online Classroom for Flexible Learning conducted by Francisco and Barcelona (2020) dealt with the role of Eliademy as a learning platform in times of emergencies. The data were gathered through the conduct of qualitative interviews with the selected respondents who were graduate school students of La Consolacion University Philippines. They found out that the respondents were convinced that Eliademy can be used as another tool for facilitating learning as evidenced by the strengths and weaknesses of such a platform.

The study of Acosta (2015) entitled Paradigm Shift in Open Education and E-Learning Resources as Teaching and Learning in the Philippines found out that some of the learners, and even the faculty still prefer to use print materials which could hinder the accumulation of knowledge, resources, and effectiveness. With this finding, a new perspective arose to appreciate the importance of distance or e-learning to be used in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines.

Synthesis of the State-of-the-Art

The various studies reviewed were summarized in the foregoing paragraphs to present a synthesis of the ideas that revealed similarities and differences within the frame of the current research and enriched the understanding of the present research.

A study conducted by Grampil (2002), Muller and Mildenberger (2021), Dayagbil et al. (2021), Demetriadis and Pombortsis (2007), and Gibbs and Kyle (n.d.) agreed that most of the faculty and students encountered difficulties in complying with school submissions due to limited internet connection. Nicolova and Collis (2002), and Agaton and Cueto (2021) investigated the challenges of using flexible learning through the lens of students and faculty members. Castroverde and Alcala (2021), and Guimalon et al. (2021) focused on the offline mode which was the modular distance learning modality.

Mahyoob (2020) focused on the issues, and obstacles confronted by English language learners which included technical, academic, and communication issues as well as their dissatisfaction with online learning. Abaid et al. (2021), Brunzell et al. (n.d.), Pickering (n.d), and Abenes and Caballes (2020) identified the issues and concerns met by students in online mode of teaching and learning process which included poor internet connection, technical difficulties, and financial problems.

Higley (2013), Muller et al. (2018), Berry (2017), Martin (2021), and Santiago et al. (2021) found that Google Meet was the preferred platform used in synchronous meetings while Google Classroom was mostly used in asynchronous classes. Similar studies which focused on the identification of learning platforms during the pandemic were conducted by Francisco and Barcelona (2020) and Nguyen (2021). On the contrary, Francisco and Barcelona (2020) identified the role of Eliademy as a learning platform in times of emergencies instead of Google Meet and Google Classroom while Nguyen (2021) ranked the level of factors as to the difficulty met in the use of LMS. In relation to advantages, the benefits of flexible learning as to its convenience and choice of how to do a certain activity were explored in a study by Joan (2013). However, this study together with Higley (2013) and Muller et al. (2018) was performed long before Covid hit the nation.

The study of Acosta (2015) determined that the students and faculty still prefer printed materials as opposed to e-resources while the study of Tuntirojanawong (2013) and Rasouli et al. (2016) investigated on the readiness in applying e-learning of graduate, and art students. The work of Thomas (2019) focused on the programs that could attract the interest of disengaged learners to go back to education using flexible learning while the work of Soffer et al. (2019) delved into the patterns of flexibility of

students according to time, place, and access to learning resources, and its relationship to course achievement.

Some studies about flexible learning involved designing a framework for asynchronous learning such as in the research of Smith (2013) which created an alternative learning system design that offered greater flexibility, and the study of Abisado et al. (2020) which made the Asynchronous Course Delivery Framework (ACCORD) for the use of asynchronous learning by the local universities and colleges (LUCs).

Gap Bridged by the Study

As opposed to the relevant studies that were read, in the context of CNSC, flexible learning is limited to online which could be synchronous and/or asynchronous, and offline with the use of modular, but face-to-face was not an option during the conduct of the study.

From the various readings, the researcher has found that most of the studies only tackled the experiences of students, teachers, parents, or a combination of the two, but not of the administrators. Besides, this is the first time that this kind of study was conducted to inquire into the experiences of the three stakeholders altogether such as the students, faculty, and administrators of CNSC on the use of FL modality amidst the Covid 19 pandemic. Further, at the time before the onset of the pandemic, no study has been conducted yet in CNSC when it comes to the online teaching and learning process.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Lev Vygotsky's social aspect of learning into constructivism (1962). He defined the "zone of proximal learning" according to which students solve problems beyond their actual developmental level (but within their level of potential development) under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Constructivism is the theory that says learners construct knowledge rather than just passively take in information. As people experience the world and reflect upon those experiences, they build their own representations and incorporate new information into their pre-existing knowledge (schemas).

The theory of social constructivism states that learners construct their own knowledge upon interacting with others. If the learners have their previous knowledge on something, it could be enhanced upon discussing the subject with their teachers or with their classmates. Instructors play a huge role in the constructivist learning theory. They function as facilitators who help students to understand the concept better. The findings in this study support the Social Constructivism of Vygotsky. One of the issues and concerns encountered by the student -respondents was the conduct of the lessons using the Asynchronous mode alone. They wanted to have the Synchronous mode as well to have a substantial discussion of the lessons. They previously had their own concepts but because of good interaction with the faculty, they form a better understanding of whatever concepts they previously had.

The approach is different from delivering lectures as the faculty starts by asking questions rather than talking about the concepts themselves. The student then, comes to the conclusion using their own understanding and the teacher continues discussions and conversations with students. This creates a learning experience that is open to new directions as the learning progresses. Therefore, agreeing with Piaget's theory of constructivism, instructors should also be a mentor, a consultant, and a coach to students. Moreover, the classroom experience is enhanced by allowing different students to come up and share their knowledge and understanding.

With the Covid 19 pandemic, the challenge among the faculty is how they could be successful in instilling knowledge among the learners even if they are hindered from connecting face-to-face. Other

theories could help the instructors facilitate learning with the use of other theories such as the Flexible Learning Theory. Flexible Learning Theory by Deb Gearhart (2008) is an approach that provides learners with various opportunities to focus more on learning requirements and individual learning circumstances. It is used in online learning which could be done synchronously or asynchronously depending on the capacity of the students and the instructors when it comes to gadgets to be used, and internet connectivity amidst the Covid pandemic since people are restricted to stay in their own homes. The instructors could still give the students a quality education through the use of this theory as long as they could give the students the activities that could still let them unleash the curiosity in their mind, by having the faculty ask questions to students that would require the latter to find out the answers. A lot of activities could also be done whether synchronous or asynchronous as long as the teachers could give meaningful activities for the students to do and finally construct their own learning.

The findings of this study agreed with the Flexible Learning Theory. In an attempt to continue providing knowledge amidst the pandemic, flexible learning was adopted by the institution. With that, the faculty uploaded activities and learning materials to the Learning Management System (LMS) for the students to work on. Doing this asynchronously, they were given enough time to acquire learnings at their own pace and time. They also conducted synchronous mode of classes as a form of an online class to give a balance to asynchronous classes.

The theory of Gearhart on Flexible Learning is fully backed-up by the Learning Management Theory (LMT) by Iris Stammberger (2010). She introduced LMT as a framework for the study and design of learning in higher education and professional practice environments. Its unit of analysis is an "expertise-driven skill unit" composed of one or more individuals of various degrees of expertise, their artifacts, and the practices by which the former engage the latter.

This theory focuses on the experts on how they would design learning in higher education. Now that the new normal is on flexible learning, these experts have to design a curriculum that would adapt to flexible learning. This curriculum should be appropriate to the changing time where students could also adapt, and the curriculum could really suit the needs of the students. This theory also supports professional development programs for higher education.

In this study, the researcher identified that this is significant to the curriculum planners as this would help them identify the measures to enhance the curriculum itself using flexible learning as an instructional approach. As they are the pool of experts, they are the ones who have the capacity to make such improvements that would truly show that flexible learning modality is the catalyst for whatever phenomenon would cause academic life to be put off.
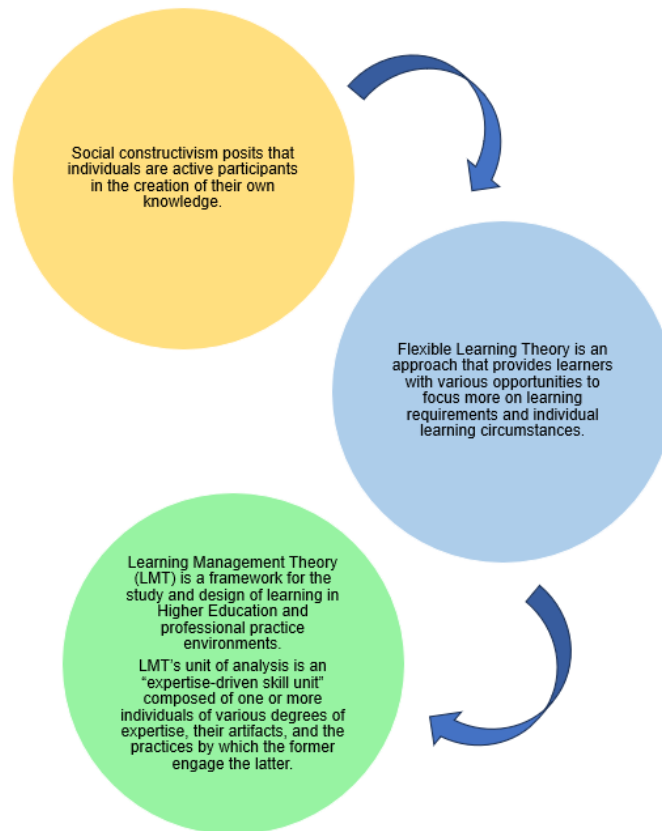
Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this study is shown in Figure 2. The focal concept of this research is to investigate the experiences of the students, faculty, and administrators of Camarines Norte State College (CNSC). These are about the issues and concerns they encountered, and how they addressed those difficulties. This is also about the insights they gained on the use of flexible learning in the conduct of the teaching and learning process during the onset of the pandemic.

A lot of issues and concerns were experienced by the students, faculty, and administration specifically in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) like the CNSC. Those challenges were hurdled by everyone as they should survive the test of time when everyone was locked up, and prevented from going out, and perform the duties and work that they used to perform when people were still free to do what they were used to doing specifically in their academic life.

Just like anyone in the world who had undergone bouts of ill effects caused by the Covid scare, each of the stakeholders was able to find strategies to address the challenges that they have experienced. Since they needed to adapt to what was acceptable, and in consonance with the pronouncements of the Inter-agency Task Force (IATF), the students, faculty, and administration were able to cope with what was required of them, so that they were able to survive the pandemic.
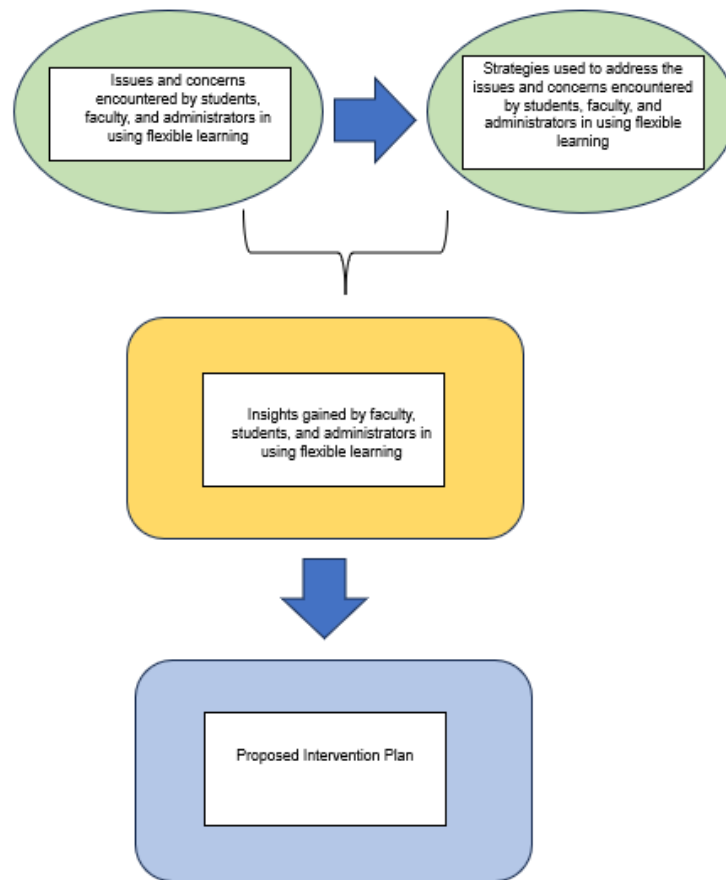
Figure 2. Conceptual Paradigm

In doing so, they have gained a lot of insights that made them survive the test of time. They were able to discover among themselves that going out of their comfort zone could make them win the battle against Covid. They have proven to themselves that flexible learning was not something to be scared of but a catalyst for them to continue with the teaching and learning process, and to withstand the challenges of managing an institution, thus they realized that the use of flexible learning brought out the best in everyone. They have come to the realization that whatever challenges they encounter have strategies for them to cope and adapt to the new normal way of doing things in times of crisis such as the pandemic.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in this qualitative study. This includes the research methods and design, the role of the researcher, informants of the study, method of data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, credibility, and ethical consideration.

Research Method

This study employed the qualitative case study design since it has to focus on the experiences of faculty, students, and administrators in using Flexible Learning as an instructional approach at the Camarines Norte State College (CNSC). The institution houses the main campus which comprises CAS, CBPA, ICS, and CoEng. It also has satellite campuses located in different parts of Camarines Norte such as CNAR in Labo; CoTT in Jose Panganiban; IFMS in Mercedes Campus; Entienza Campus in Sta. Elena; and the College of Education (CoEd) Abaño Campus at Daet, Camarines Norte.

The present study delves into the experiences of faculty, students, and administrators in using flexible learning as an instructional approach in the new normal which covers the 1st semester of AY 2020-2021.

Ethical considerations were made by first seeking the necessary permission from the President of Camarines Norte State College to allow the conduct of this study which concerns the experiences of CNSC stakeholders on the use of flexible learning as an instructional approach during the time of Covid 19 pandemic.

At the same time, permission from the respondents were sought if they were willing to participate in the study. Upon explaining the purpose of the research, they were sent the informed consent uploaded in their Messenger account. They were also informed that they may stop participating anytime if they felt that they did not want to continue anymore. They were also assured that their identity would remain anonymous.

Research Participants

The participants of the study were the faculty, students, and administrators who have experienced the Flexible Learning approach at the Camarines Norte State College (CNSC) during the 1st semester of the Academic Year 2020-2021 when CoVid 19 pandemic had just started giving its toll. CNSC has satellite campuses located in different parts of Camarines Norte such as CNAR in Labo; CoTT in Jose Panganiban; IFMS in Mercedes Campus; Entienza Campus at Sta. Elena; and the College of Education (CoEd) Abaño Campus in Daet, Camarines Norte. It also has the main campus which houses CAS, CBPA, ICS, and CoEng.

The participants were purposely selected according to the commonalities and similarities of their profiles to represent each group. There were three groups of respondents which were the faculty, students, and administrators. Five faculty were from the Federated Faculty Association (FFA), 3 students from the Union of Supreme Student Council (USSG), and 4 Administrators from the top echelon. Respondents to this study who represented the administration were the Head of the institution, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and 2 deans who have been in the position for 2 years and beyond, with academic rank of Assistant Professor, and assigned to small delivery units. Five (5) two-time officers of CNSC Federated Faculty Association, with academic rank of Associate Professor, and have been in the service for 10 years or beyond. On the other hand, three (3) officers of Union of Supreme Student Government (USSG) who were 3rd year college, had respective scholarship grants, and belonged to the economic poverty line represented the students.

In the selection of the participants, purposive sampling was used. According to Patton (2002), purposive sampling is a sampling technique that qualitative researchers use to recruit participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, Creswell & Clark (2011) stated that purposive sampling involves identifying or selecting groups of individuals that are knowledgeable, and have experienced the certain phenomenon.

The selection criteria for the participants in this study were based on the facts that the faculty, students, and administrators have experienced and become part of the implementation of Flexible Learning as an instructional approach. Furthermore, they were selected regardless of their age, gender, or religion.

Research Instruments

The research instruments or tools used in the study were the Guide Questions for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) which was done separately for the three (3) groups of respondents, and a laptop with built-in video recorder using the Google Meet platform to capture the proceedings of the FGDs conducted. It was then used in the transcription of the FGDs for each group of participants.

The Guide Questions were checked by the three (3) colleagues from the academe whose expertise was on qualitative research. Before it was used in the actual conduct of the FGDs for the CNSC participants,

it was tested first through a dry-run in another school which was the Mabini Colleges respondents. Since there were no problems encountered with the administration of the instrument, then it was finally used in the conduct of the actual FGDs.

They covered the areas of Instruction, Attitude, Resources, and the Legal Landscape. For students and faculty respondents to answer Statement of the Problem number 1 which was the issues and concerns encountered on the use of flexible learning as to Instruction, questions as to their concepts of flexible learning, synchronous and asynchronous modes, teaching strategies, and instructional materials used, and their experiences on the exchange of learning materials or modules were asked. As to Attitude as an indicator, the student and faculty participants were asked as to their adaptability to the new normal situation, their experiences on the conduct of synchronous and/or asynchronous class, assessment of the performance, submission of requirements, and if there were other issues they encountered in the use of flexible learning. With regard to Resources, they were asked as to availability of gadgets and internet, participation in class interaction, use of other platforms other than the CNSC Learning Management System (LMS). As to the legal landscape, they were asked how the different proclamations issued by the government, whether national or local or by the IATF affected their performance.

To answer the second statement of the problem, they were asked as to their strategies used to address the issues and concerns on flexible learning when it comes to adaptability to different strategies, exchange of learning materials or modules, and their attitude towards adaptability, attendance to synchronous and/or asynchronous class, grades, submission of requirements, and other issues and concerns if there were any. They were also asked how they managed the lack of resources such as gadgets and internet connection, class interaction, platforms used, and how they addressed the issue on the LMS. As to question number three (3) on the insights gained from the use of flexible learning (FL), the students and faculty were asked about their realization, reflection, or formed concepts as to their experiences, and their suggestions on how to enhance the use of FL as an instructional approach.

Basically, the guide questions for Administrator-respondents' FGD were the same with the other groups except that there was a slight variation as to the manner of questioning, and the exclusion of some not applicable questions to this group of participants. Some of the questions in the area of Instruction were focused on the management as to how the institution implemented the flexible learning modality, the manner of evaluating the conduct of classes, and the monitoring of the performance of the faculty. It also includes questions on how they did assess the performance of the faculty.

They were also asked how they managed to provide resources like gadgets to those students and faculty who were in need of laptop, and the different implementations to address the issue of digital divide, ways to address the issue of the difficulty on the use of CNSC LMS, as well as the necessary measures to combat the inconveniences caused by the different proclamations of the IATF. Just like the students and faculty participants, the administrators were also asked about their reflections or realizations on the use of flexible learning, and on their plan to enhance the use of flexible learning as an instructional approach.

Data Gathering Procedure

The gathering of data commenced upon the approval of the study. Ethical consideration was observed by seeking permission to conduct the research from the authorities. Permission was sought from the President of Camarines Norte State College (CNSC) to conduct the study which concerns the experiences of the institution, not only in handling the effects of the pandemic by the top echelon, as well as the experiences of their stakeholders such as faculty and students.

The guide questions for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were evaluated by three colleagues in the academe who also had their respective dissertations in qualitative form. After that process, respondents were identified purposively through the process of commonality. Respondents to this study who represented the administration were the Head of the institution, Vice President for Academic Affairs, 2 deans/campus directors who have been in the position for 2 years and beyond, held the academic rank of Assistant Professor, and assigned to small delivery units. On the other hand, five (5) two-time officers of the CNSC Federated Faculty Association, with the academic rank of Associate Professor, and have been in the service for 10 years or beyond represented the faculty while three (3) officers of Union of Supreme Student Government (USSG) who were 3rd year college, had respective scholarship grants, and belonged to economic poverty line represented the students.

Before the conduct of the FGD to the CNSC stakeholders, the researcher sought the approval of the President of Mabini Colleges to allow the conduct of a dry-run to validate the instrument. After it was approved, the dry run proceeded via Google Meet. There was no variation made with the instrument after it was conducted as it ran smoothly with the respondents.

After the dry run, the conduct of FGD for CNSC stakeholders was set. The researcher contacted online via FB Messenger the identified respondents about the request for their valued participation, and willingness to participate in the FGD, and got affirmative answers. They were then sent a copy of informed consent, and cleared to them that they were not obliged to do so had they chosen not to get involved anymore, and that they could abort their participation if they would have a change of mind at any given time.

The researcher sought the availability of the participants' schedule for their respective Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as the three (3) groups had separate FGDs. When they were amenable to the given date and time, the inquiry on the experiences of the Camarines Norte State College (CNSC) stakeholders specifically the faculty, students, and administrators on the use of Flexible Learning as an instructional approach amidst the pandemic began. Since the researcher was the one who facilitated the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), she made sure to become objective, and neutral, thus avoiding being biased. She participated very little by just being in control of the situation in the sense that the participant who was speaking was led to focus on the question being asked. She also made sure that respondents who seldom participate were encouraged to speak up to share their experiences. The FGD was done online via Google Meet in which it was recorded through the built-in recording application of the platform used. A note-taker assisted the researcher in the FGD to capture the moments.

The FGD started with a brief orientation on the purpose of the study, and why they were purposely selected were made known to the participants. They were also informed that had he/she felt that he/she did not want to continue with the proceedings of the FGD, he/she could do so, as being part of the FGD was voluntary. At the same time, participants were assured that all the information that they shared would be confidential such that in the transcription of the FGD, code names were used for each of them in reporting the findings of the study.

When the data have been gathered, and the researcher heard the same information from the respondents, she knew that it was already the saturation point. The FGD lasted for one and a half hours. She then thanked the respondents and let them know how she appreciated their time and effort to be part of the study, and that token of appreciation for the respondents would be sent via courier. During the FGD, the researcher secured the anonymity of the respondents by using code names instead of their real names. Using the recordings of the FGD, transcription was done verbatim. After this, the answers of the

respondents were sorted and labelled using in vivo coding which is the process of finding the similarities or nearness of the concepts of their answers, then themes were assigned.

Ethical Considerations

After securing the necessary permit from the Office of the CNSC President for the conduct of the research, and from Mabini Colleges to conduct the dry-run, the participants' consent was sought. They were given the information about the purpose of the study and further addressed the questions coming from them for them to decide whether to participate or not. The researcher also made sure that there was no coercion in any activity which was against the participants' willingness.

Moreover, they were informed that they can withdraw from their participation anytime, and that their withdrawal will not affect them personally or professionally. The identities of the respondents were hidden such that no one will be able to trace their answers to them. The researcher made sure that their identities were anonymous, thus, the use of code names was applied. At the same time, Informed Consent Forms were properly utilized. Furthermore, she ensured that the study would have no issue with plagiarism, and that all data were original. Aside from that, all the authors were cited, and acknowledged properly. The researcher also took into consideration the strict compliance of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Issues and Concerns Encountered on the Use of Flexible Learning as Experienced by Students, Faculty, and Administration

The issues and concerns encountered on the use of flexible learning as experienced by the students, faculty, and administration have already been identified. Covid 19 had inflicted a 360-degree turn of events on people's lives, and the academic institutions were not spared from the blows of the sudden change. Adjustment to the new normal was not that easy for the majority upon the issuance of Pres. Duterte of Proclamation No. 922, s. of 2020 declaring the country in a state of public health emergency throughout the Philippines, thus preventing face-to-face instructions due to the imposition of a community quarantine. CHED, in this regard issued Memorandum Order No. 04 to use Flexible learning as an instructional approach. There were issues and concerns identified by the three (3) groups of respondents identified according to themes.

For the purpose of clarity, the respondents were asked first as to their concept of flexible learning, as well as synchronous and asynchronous. As to their understanding of Flexible Learning, the majority of the students say that it connotes freedom to choose what modality fits them. They also agree that in synchronous mode, they meet virtually at the same time where students could ask questions and get direct answers from the faculty. In asynchronous mode, the faculty uploads activities in the Google Classroom, then students do those things at their own pace and time.

As to the faculty, flexible learning is a combination of online and offline modes of learning. They understood that in synchronous, there is real time interaction between students and faculty where learning is guided. The faculty could share their Powerpoint presentation, and engage the students in the discussion. This is also a good chance for the students to ask questions or clarifications about the topic. This is also the mode of learning where they could have better interaction as the answers to the question could be given outright. The faculty describe the asynchronous class as the mode where they could upload activities for students to access in a more relaxed way.

The administration views flexible learning as a tool to continue any other means to execute management and instruction amidst the pandemic. Synchronous mode for them is a 2-way interactive communication that happens in actual time. This is where they could call for a meeting where they prefer to use Zoom if that involves the faculty and staff or Google Meet if they need to connect to their students. In asynchronous mode, the uploaded instructional materials and other activities by faculty for students to do in their own convenient time could be viewed by the deans, program chairpersons, and administrators.

In the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted separately, the answers of the three (3) stakeholders were coded and themed. Below is the figure of the thematic analysis paradigm which shows the generated themes as to the issues and concerns on the use of flexible learning in the midst of the pandemic. With regard to poor internet connectivity, all of the respondents, even the administrators suffered from it. This was so because everybody, especially during the onset of the pandemic had difficulty when it comes to a good internet connection. Even though one has money to pay for the internet, or to buy load, but if the service providers could not handle the influx of consumers, they will suffer from the inconveniences caused by weak wifi connection.

As to struggle in the use of online platforms, all of the respondents agreed that it was an issue as not everyone was not able to adapt to technology, the different social media platforms and applications that one has to manipulate in order to keep up with the demand of the time. They also encountered concern on the use of teleconferencing platforms like Zoom, and Google Meet. This was because everything was new to them as this was the exact opposite of what the traditional face-to-face mode which they were used to before the pandemic.
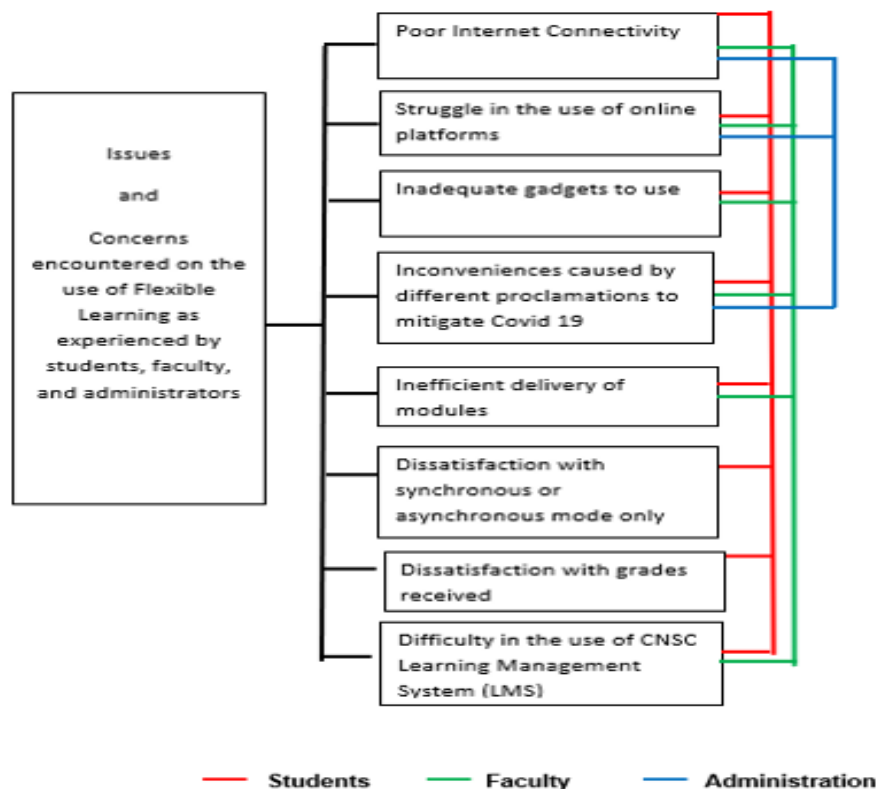

Figure 3. Thematic Analysis Paradigm Issues and Concerns

As shown in Figure 3, there were eight (8) themes that were identified. All of these issues and concerns were encountered by the students. These were poor internet connectivity, struggle in the use of online platforms, inadequate gadgets to use, inconvenience caused by different proclamations to mitigate Covid 19, inefficient delivery of modules, dissatisfaction with synchronous or asynchronous mode only, dissatisfaction with grades received, and difficulty in the use of CNSC Learning Management System (LMS).

On the other hand, only six (6) of the identified issues and concerns were encountered by the faculty. They were poor internet connectivity, struggle in the use of online platforms, inadequate gadgets to use, inconvenience caused by different proclamations to mitigate Covid 19, inefficient delivery of modules, and difficulty in the use of CNSC LMS. They did not experience dissatisfaction with the use of synchronous or asynchronous only, and dissatisfaction with the grades received. As to the administrators, only three (3) out of the eight (8) identified issues and concerns were experienced by them. These were the poor internet connectivity, struggle in the use of online platforms, and the inconveniences caused by different proclamations to mitigate Covid 19. These were also the common issues and concerns experienced by the three (3) groups of respondents.

Poor Internet Connectivity

Result shows that difficulty in internet access due to poor internet connectivity was the root cause of most of the issues and concerns that the three (3) groups of participants encountered on the use of Flexible Learning during the 1st semester of AY 2020-2021. It was the reason why students could not attend the synchronous classes as they had difficulty in joining due to weak wifi signal. There were times when they successfully connected but suddenly got disconnected. To some students, this made them feel disappointed with their own academic performance, so as they long to go back to the old normal which was the traditional face-to-face mode.

Most of the time, they could not easily access the links of the activities uploaded in any of the platforms where they were uploaded for the asynchronous learning. This further shows that even though the students would like to attend the synchronous or asynchronous classes, difficulty on the access to internet connection prevented them from doing so. In asynchronous class where the faculty uploaded certain activities for the students to do at their own pace and time, some of them were not able to submit their output for the activities on time due to poor wifi signal.

As some of the students shared:

> Actually, yung isa ko pong classmate, umaakyat pa siya ng niyogan, something ganun po para makasagap lang po sya ng internet connection para po maka-attend siya during synchronous classes po. {S1}

> (A classmate of mine went up to coconut tree, something like that to get internet connection, so as to attend in the synchronous classes. {S1}

This statement was corroborated by another respondent, who stated that:

> Minsan po unstable signal lalo na po pag ang panahon ay medyo maulan. And, yung iba ko pong kaklase, may mga naakyat pa po ng bubong para lang matapos yung reporting kasi po nasa bubong nga po siya eh, minsan po may kidlat, ganon po. {S2}

> (Sometimes, signal was unstable especially if it was rainy, my other classmates went up to the roof just to finish their reporting…because they were on the roof…sometimes..lightning flashed...those things….{S2}

It was how strong or how poor the internet connection was at their end determined their participation in class interaction. When asked if the students participated actively in the discussion, the answer was a resounding no, thus to quote the answer of student-respondent number 2.

> No po..and it really hurt my feelings because pag nagsasagot po ako, I always wanted to share my insights…I always wanted to answer a question that would reflect my personality…so parang nagkakaroon po ako ng anxiety…I wasn't able to participate actively dahil po nadi-disconnect ako pag na open ng camera. {S2}

> (No, it wasn't…and it really hurt my feelings because whenever I answered………….so seemed like I experienced anxiety…I wasn't able to participate actively because I got disconnected whenever I open the camera. {S2})

For the faculty, poor internet connectivity was also an issue. It was difficult for them to upload the activities for the asynchronous classes. They even had to extend time awoke at the wee hours of the morning when internet signal is stronger to send the materials for the students in the Google Classroom. For synchronous classes, they could not start accepting the students in the link that they sent to the group chat. There were also times that they got disconnected at the middle of the discussion or sounded choppy, so the flow of the lessons was so much affected.

Furthermore, the number of participants in a synchronous session was very limited. They were even at a loss as to how they would keep the students in the class. Nevertheless, they stayed in the Google Meet, so that they could get hold of those who could stay. Sometimes, they were in a quandary whether the students were really cut off due to poor internet connection, or if they had only left the meeting intentionally due to recitation or class interaction.

As some faculty put it:

The majority were somewhat passive. When you called their names to participate, it took several seconds before they could answer. They even say that their wifi is unstable. {F3}

(Karamihan eh, parang walang reaksyon. Kapag tinawag mo ang pangalan nila, eh bibilang ng maraming segundo bago sila makasagot. Sasabihin nila na ang wifi nila eh paputol-putol.) {F3})

Even the administrators, especially those from satellite campuses encountered such a challenge. Just like what an administrator said:

During the first semester po or the first implementation of flexible learning…it was very difficult and very challenging for all of us especially we have encountered difficulty in terms of technology, and internet connectivity. Meron po kaming prepaid wifi… mahirap pong kumuha ng signal...ipinupwesto po namin kung saan-saan…{A4}

> (Noong unang semester po o noong panahon na unang ipinatupad ang flexible learning…napakahirap po, at napakalaking hamon para sa aming lahat lalo na ng naranasan naming ang hirap lalo na sa paggamit ng teknolohiya, at ng internet. We had prepaid wifi..and it was difficult to get a signal…We had to place it anywhere….{A4}
>
> As dean po…kami po ang nagi-enrol ng faculty and students sa LMS. Ako po, I had to sleep madaling araw na po kasi tinatantiya ko po ang lakas ng internet, usually po na-start sya malalim na ang gabi o madaling araw para mag-encode ng mga email (address) po nila….{A4}.
>
> (Bilang dekana po, we were the ones to enrol the faculty and students in the LMS. Kinakailangan ko pong matulog during the dawn because I had to estimate the strength of the internet which started in the late night hours or during the dawn for me to encode their email addresses for them to use the LMS…{.A4}

Thus, if there was one issue that was the root of all the challenges met by students, faculty, and administration, that would be the internet connection as it really dictates what would happen to one's performance when it comes to online mode. This was so because the service providers could not handle the influx of consumers. This was the reason why poor internet connectivity was aggravated.

Despite having all the gadgets that one could ever need, if the internet connection is slow or intermittent, worst, not having connection at all, that would mess up one's plan of conducting and participating in an online class

The issues and concerns that the three (3) groups of participants encountered in the use of flexible learning agreed with the findings of Abaid (2021) that in a developing country like the Philippines, online mode of learning cannot have satisfying results as a vast majority of learners do not have access to good internet connectivity due to technological and financial constraints issues. On the other hand, in his doctoral thesis, Berry (2017) posited that students perceive that there is no difference between synchronous and asynchronous when it comes to distance learning. This is because the students have already experienced how online learning is such an issue that should be addressed.

With the rate that is going on, anyone who is eager to attend online class would suffer from disappointment as they could not participate nor join the online class due to weak internet signal. Thus, there is really a need to find a place where there is a good wifi signal.

Struggle in the Use of Online Platforms

Another issue that the three (3) groups of participants experienced in Flexible Learning during the pandemic was their struggle in the use of learning platforms. With the sudden change from traditional to online, a lot of applications were introduced abruptly wherein they experienced difficulty on how to adapt themselves to the use of a certain platform or application. With the sudden change of learning modalities, stakeholders were forced to adapt to it, or they would be left behind.

The students experienced difficulty in adaptability to learning platforms as when the faculty uploaded supplemental materials, they, then did not find it easy to do the tasks due to unfamiliarity with the platform used, as well as accessing the links to open, what more in submitting the requirements that they had to do after. Student participant number 3 said;

> Sometimes, they've given us the task to access this kind of link and then submit answers to the quiz, but since we are new to this kind of modality, and we are new to this kind of sites, we weren't able to complete the task ahead of time because we are just adapting to it. {S3}
>
> (Kung minsan po, bibigyan nila kami ng gawain, at gamitin ang ibinigay na link, tapos ipapasa namin ang sagot sa pagsusulit, pero dahil bago po kami sa ganitong pamamaraan, hindi po namin magawang makumpleto ang mga gawain sa tamang oras dahil hindi pa po kami sanay dito. {S3}

On the other hand, even the faculty had their own share of difficulty on the use of technology specifically on the use of various platforms. Aside from getting used to Zoom or Google Meet, they also struggled in using the LMS in uploading the activities. With all the various platforms to choose from during that time, there was a tendency to limit themselves on the use of one platform where they are used to doing it.

As what a faculty said:

> I was not expert in the use of Google Classroom, Google Meet, or even the LMS then. I cannot operate those platforms…Medyo mahirap sa part ko in the delivery of lessons kase ba naman hindi ako well-versed para doon sa mga processes sa the use of other platforms natin. {F4}
>
> (Hindi ako expert sa paggamit ng Google Classroom, Google Meet, or kahit na LMS. Hindi ko magawang magamit ang mga platforms na iyon…It was difficult on my part para sa paggamit noon sa mg leksyon because I was not well-versed in using those platforms.) {F4}

On the part of the administrators, they also had their share of difficulty. As an administrator said,

Noong una, hirap na hirap talaga kami. Ako, personally kasi hindi gano'n kagaling sa technology…{A2}

At first, it was very difficult for us. I, personally was not adept to technology…..{A2}

During the first semester po or the first implementation of flexible learning, it was very difficult and very challenging for all of us especially we have encountered difficulty in terms of technology…..{A4}

> Iyong personal assessment ko, medyo nahirapan kasi there was a time… so, sa halip na iyong CNSC LMS ang gamitin nila, naghanap sila ng ibang platform…dahil sa internet connectivity, medyo nahirapan iyong iba…nahirapan in terms of technical aspect.{A1}
>
> {In my personal assessment, it was quite difficult because may mga oras noon…instead that they used CNSC LMS, they looked for other platforms…because of internet connectivity. Others found it difficult. It was difficult for them dahil sa technical aspect.) {A1}

This struggle in the use of online platforms had connections with what Winter, E. et al. (2021) posited in their work that the challenges met by teachers to the successful facilitation of technology to improve the education of learners are training, and their attitude, and lack of confidence on the use of technology.

Inadequate Gadgets to Use

Resources like laptops or Smartphones are must-haves in order to survive the online class amidst pandemic. Students, despite not having their own gadgets become resourceful in order to do the activities that the faculty have instructed them to do. Majority of them were able to submit the requirements but there were a few who find it difficult to comply, thus resulted to non-submission of output on time. Some have just borrowed from a family member, or even from a classmate. Some sought help from sponsors to have even a second-hand cellphone or laptop. As what student 2 said:

> Nakikihiram po siya ng cellphone just to attend synchronous classes. May time po na gamit din po ng may-ari ng phone yung cellphone nga, so he wasn't able to attend {S2}.
>
> (He just borrowed cellphone para maka-attend ng klase. Sometimes, it was being used by the owner of the cellphone kaya hindi po sya nakaka-attend) {S2}.

The faculty had their own story on the issue of gadgets. Some of them have laptops that are dilapidated but are still functioning. Others did not have their own laptops as well. As what Faculty no. 4 stated:

> I used the laptop kahit pa yung laptop ko ay three times ng nahulog sa DLTB during my study pero andun pa rin, gumana pa rin yung laptop ko. Medyo stressful sa part ko pero I see to it na during the synchronous and asynchronous time, yung laptop gumagana {F4}.
>
> (Ginagamit ko yung laptop even though it had fallen already three times in DLTB nong nage-eskwela pa ako but still, it was still working. It was somewhat stressful on my part but siniguro ko na noong oras ng synchronous at asynchronous, the laptop was working {F4}).

Both the students and faculty have experienced difficulty in the availability of gadgets since majority of them have old gadgets which were somewhat not in good condition to survive the rudiments of daily online class. But since Filipinos are creative and somewhat resilient, they were able to deliver what was expected of them.

Cleofas and Rocha (2021) found that most of the learner-respondents who did not own laptops or tablets encountered high levels of Covid 19-related diseases such as anxiety and other mental health issue. Just like in CNSC, it gave additional load of stress to those students who did not have their own gadget as they find it difficult to participate actively in academics. At the same time, the faculty could not conduct classes if they did not have a laptop or Smartphone of good quality. For this reason, the academe may do

initiatives to extend help to those students and faculty to facilitate the teaching and learning process in the midst of the pandemic

Inconvenience Caused by Different Proclamations to Mitigate Covid 19

During the time of Covid 19 pandemic, there were a lot of proclamations involving national and local issuances such as the declaration of public health emergency by Pres. Rodrigo R. Duterte, the IATF Protocols, and the LGUs self-imposed curfew. The inconveniences caused by different proclamations to mitigate Covid 19 has become a big contributing factor to the issues and concerns encountered by the groups of participants.

It seemed like a blow to the students as they were used to the traditional mode of learning. These issuances limited their movements as they were not allowed by the government to go out of their residence. In some instances, there were activities that they did not easily do as they could not go out of the house to practice with their groupmates.

For them, they find difficulty in doing the activities that they had to do especially when it required collaboration with their classmates. There were some group activities that they should have performed in a group like dances, or chorale presentations, not to mention the activities that they had to do for their classes in TLE or PE. They were also required to perform it live, and had to make a video of themselves collaborating to come up with a presentation that would look like they were together in a certain place. Some were not able to borrow books from the library which they were used to doing, so this limitation affected their academic performance.

As what student 1 narrated:

> Sa inilabas po (na kautusan) na kung saan, it limits the students to perform everyday task…. {S1}
>
> (With the proclamations po, nalimitahan ang mga mag-aaral sa paggawa ng pang-araw-araw na gawain….) {S1}

Student 2 remarked;

> Syempre ma'am… nalilimit na po iyong learning naming...di po kami nagkakaroon ng time to explore new things beyond the control or beyond kase po parang sabihin na natin ma'am na di na po conducive yung learning…pag nasa bahay tayo like this po pag uma-attend tayo ng meet, maraming distractions sa paligid,and also po na nagsasabi nga po na bawal pumunta sa school.. ung sa library like that po,,,yung materials po naming dati sa LET na parang di pa po ina-allow na manghiram ng mga books kasi bawal po pumunta sa school, so it affects our academic performance po. {S2}
>
> {Of course, ma'am, our learnings became limited…We didn't have time na alamin ang ibang mga bagay na hindi namin kontrolado because we would say ma'am that the learning was not conducive….When we were home ..whenever we attended na {google} meet..there were a lot of distractions in the area…and also it was prohibited to go to school nor in the library…those materials in LET seemed not to be allowed for us to borrow as going to school was not allowed….so it affected our academic performance. {S2})

Even the faculty shared the same sentiment that indeed, those issuances affected the delivery of their lessons. They were somewhat affected as they had to go to the institution to submit their prepared modules or learning materials. They also needed to retrieve the learning materials which the students had sent back for the faculty. There were some things that they had to attend to personally especially when it comes to submission of requirements to the office.

Faculty number 3 stated;

> Yes, there was an effect in the delivery of the lesson kasi nga since everything was virtual…yung explanation na nakukuha nila sa particular lesson eh hindi sapat…unlike kung face to face, mas mai-explain ko yung solutions to a particular problem in Math. {F3}
>
> (Oo, may epekto sa pagdaloy ng leksyon because online po…ang paliwanag that we get sa leksyon was not enough…taliwas kung face-to-face, I could explain the solutions sa Math). {F3}

On the other hand, the heads of the offices find it difficult to retrieve the learning materials which were previously delivered. This was because the students or their representatives were not able to bring them back to the LGU for delivering it back to the faculty. In that case, the exchange of modules was not that kind of successful due to the domino effect that it causes.

As what an administrator put it,

> A1: Ah, isa ito sa mga factors na nakaapekto sa pag-execute successfully ng flexible learning…Unang-una sa CNSC, yung mobility may issue…although ginamit natin ang vehicle ng CNSC sa pagsundo at paghatid ng mga empleyado at pagdala ng learning materials…syempre yung movement eh hindi gano'n kaganda.
>
> Indeed, the different proclamations from the national down to the local level have given so much impact to the students, faculty, and administration. Those tested their resiliency in coping with the challenges they met. Amidst all the odds caused by the pandemic, they were able to survive and deliver what was necessary for them.

In a press release by Global Campaign for Education (2022), it stated that UNESCO disclosed that over 800 million learners globally have been affected by Covid 19 pandemic, and that 1 in 5 learners could not attend school, 1 in 4 could not attend higher education classes, and over 102 nations ordered school closures while 11 have implemented localized school closure. In the Philippines, some schools opted to close their operation due to the impact of the pandemic but a big percentage of academic institutions were able to survive. This was so because of the cooperation and mutual agreement among the faculty and the administrators of the school to hold on. In the case of the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) like CNSC, although there were few students who were not able to continue their studies, majority were able to finish the semesters because of the support that they got from their classmates and professors.

Inefficient Delivery of Modules

The inefficient delivery of modules was also an issue for both students and faculty as they have their own difficulties encountered in the use of flexible learning. The Office of the Dean collated those materials, and scheduled the delivery to those students who signified that they wanted the modular approach since they did not have the resources like a gadget, not to mention that they did not have internet connection. At the start of the semester in each class during the pandemic, there was an

orientation in every class. A survey was conducted by the faculty for the students to choose whether they opted to attend online classes or whether they would like to have the modular approach since they did not have the resources like gadgets.

After the survey was made, those who have chosen the modular approach, they (or any representative with acceptable age) had to claim it from the LGU that they belonged to as the administration signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the LGUs where pick up of modules will happen, or to the CNSC delivery unit which they were near to. It was just that those who chose to avail of the modules found it inconvenient when it came to delivery and claim of the materials.

Inconvenience happened when the faculty concerned were late in bringing them to the Office of the Dean, and at the same time, it was stuck in the LGU concerned when the students did not claim them right away. When the time that the CNSC representatives were about to collect the answered learning materials/modules from the concerned students, the latter had not returned them yet, causing a delay in the submission of modules activities.

This became a cycle that went, causing a domino effect. Consequently, it resulted to having late submission of grades by the faculty because they had to wait patiently for the students who had not submitted the requirements, not to mention that some of the lessons were quite vague to the students as the digital divide separated them from reaching their professors to be enlightened to gray areas of the lessons.

Like what Student no. 1 said;

> Sabi po niya {kaklase}, yung module daw po is napaka-inconvenient nya po kasi syempre po that time, yung delivery po ng module is pinupunta punta po sa bawat municipality. Mabagal po iyung delivery kaya nade-delay po syang sagutan ito. {FGD-S}
>
> (According to my classmate, the mode of delivery was very inconvenient as they have to get it from the LGU. The delivery is somewhat delayed, consequently, the submission of their output is delayed as well. {S1})

This was due to the delay in the preparation or submission of modules by other faculty at the dean's office wherein modules were delivered in bulk by CNSC vehicle to the local government unit (LGU) where the students reside. The faculty as the rule should have made the modules and have them reproduced, and packed for submission to the dean's office, then for delivery to the municipalities involved in the MOA with CNSC.

As faculty number 1 said:

> In terms of preparation, it's quite tasky...with regard to the distribution, since meron kaming schedule kung kailan isa-submit…sa adviser pa yata noon pino-forward yung mga learning materials, although nale-late mag-submit, pagkakuha o pagpi-pick up nung mga materials ng mga estudyante sa mga identified drop-off points…since we have a schedule to submit the modules to the adviser of the concerned students. {F1}
>
> (Yung paghahanda {ng learning materials}, matrabaho…tungkol naman sa pamimigay, because there was a schedule when to submit it…since they had to forward them to adviser..to get or pick up by

the students from identified locations…dahil may schedule ang

pagdala ng modules sa adviser ng nasabing estudyante. {F1}).

In CNSC, the faculty were well-aware on how modular approach works, but due to the pandemic, circumstances prevented them from delivering the modules. Modules are good supplemental instructional materials because they are hardcopy which you could read with gusto without depending on technology. It was just that it became inconvenient to get and submit that made them ineffective as it could not be explained by the teacher unlike during the face-to-face mode when if there were questions, the teacher could explain and tell the answers, thus resulting in a better understanding of the lesson.

In the study of Guiamalon et al. (2021), it found that teachers are well-oriented and prepared to perform their tasks and functions on modular distance learning education in times of pandemic. They also have enough training and skill development necessary to effectively and efficiently do their job.

Dissatisfaction with synchronous or asynchronous mode only

The other identified theme which only the students encountered was the dissatisfaction with synchronous or asynchronous mode alone. At the start of the semester, a survey was made for the students to choose what learning mode best fits them whether online or offline. Those who had no access to the internet opted to have it the modular way while the majority chose online which could be synchronous or asynchronous or both.

There were times during the synchronous learning that the main instructional material used by the faculty was just the Powerpoint Presentation. In this mode, the students feel that there was limited time to have those concepts on screen discussed fully and achieved the desired learning outcome. They found it more advantageous when it was uploaded in the learning platform as well, as that was the time that they could grasp better ideas when they read, and studied it at their own pace and time.

Since some of the students could not attend the synchronous class, they contend themselves to asynchronous class only. But there were also some concerns raised by the students. Some have experienced that they did not have any synchronous class. They were only given purely supplemental materials like videos for their asynchronous class in which they could not clarify with the faculty concerned the things that they wanted to be enlightened about, thus learning was not so achieved in the absence of outright answers to their clarifications.

This was so because in the IRR issued, the faculty had an option whether to do the instructions either via synchronous, asynchronous, or both modes. But as to how the students viewed it, it was far better if the learning modality would be a combination of both as they learned better if it were done asynchronously as they could be given enough time to explore the activities given. At the same time, synchronous mode of learning was an indispensable counterpart as that was the time when students could ask for clarification or further explanation on a certain area of discussion. That point proved that online class would be more beneficial if it were a combination of synchronous and asynchronous modes.

There were times when students did not chat or send messages to the faculty because of some preconceived notions that the concerned faculty would not answer them anyway, or they would be in the "seen" mode only especially if they needed to have the answer right away. That was for them to ensure that they were on the right track in doing the tasks as there were times that whenever their output was done and ready for submission, then that was only the time that their output would be subject to revision. A student remarked:

Yung iba pong faculty, ma'am… medyo nakulangan lang po kami

kasi supplemental materials lang po yung binibigay nila Ma'am like

> videos. Wala po kaming synchronous meeting. Meron naman pong seen lang….{S1}.
>
> (Other faculty, ma'am…seemed not to give enough because they only gave supplemental materials like videos. We didn't have synchronous meeting...Others just look at the message without any response…{S1}).

In the work of Barberos et al. (2020), they agreed that the faculty could facilitate various teaching methods and styles to motivate the students to become independent learners. Although in the CNSC Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), it was stated that the faculty could conduct synchronous, asynchronous or both modes, faculty were encouraged, and students appreciated it if there was one (1) synchronous meeting in their subject allocated per week for the discussion of the topics, and for the students to do the clarifications if there were any.

Dissatisfaction with the Grades Received

Dissatisfaction with the grades received was also experienced only by the students. Grades received for the academic performance of students were important for them to know so as to gauge how they were as students themselves. With this new normal, it was expected that there would be some changes in the grades that they were used to having before the pandemic happened. Activities that faculty had given to their students were expected to be given for the students to have supplemental materials to contribute to the amount of learning that they could have gotten from a certain subject. It was just that sometimes, a certain subject had given an activity that required so much time and effort to come up with what was expected of them. Some were unhappy because they got disappointing grades, as what student no. 3 stated:

> I am disappointed po…yung 1 week po, or yung limang araw po na klase naming ay dun lang halos sa time niya or doon sa activity nya na lang nagugugol lahat, and yun po nadi-disappoint lang po ako ng ganoon.,,kasi sobrang we exert much effort po dun sa activity na 'yun especially po dun sa mga videos. Satisfied po pero disappointed din somehow with some of my grades po. {S3}
>
> (Hindi po ako masaya {sa grades}...On the 5 days or 1 week of classes, all the days were consumed in an activity…and that frustrated me…because nagsikap talaga ako lalo na sa mga videos. I was satisfied but disappointed sa iba ko pang grades.){S3}

The faculty gave grades to the students according to what was indicated in the syllabus as approved by the office. But there were times that students wonder ed why they got grades that were not expected by them. Sometimes, there were circumstances that lessened the time that students should have spent with the subjects because a particular subject consumed so much time. This was so because some of the faculty had given them a lot of activities to the detriment of their other subjects. They did not have enough time and energy to answer the activities that the other faculty in their other subjects have required them to do.

Sometimes, students resulted to non-submission of requirements on time because some have other priorities like part-time job. This is one of the concerns that the faculty experienced, thus resulting to late submission of grades. As one faculty stated:

> Some of the students normally eh they are submitting their output, yung iba eh late. Makikita naman sa Google Classroom, yung date na sine-set natin, pagtingin mo, out of 30 students, nakapag-turn in palang minsan eh 20…because some of the students eh nagpa-part time job yan so hindi nila kaagad-agad naipapasa. {F4}
>
> (Iyong ibang estudyante ay nagsa-submit ng kanilang mga gawain, others were late {submitting output}. You could see it in the Google Classroom, the date of submission set. When you checked it, mula sa 30 estudyante, only 20 had turned in…ang ibang estudyante had part-time jobs, so they could not submit on time. {F4})

Hashemi (2021) posited that the pandemic has affected the academic performance of Afghan students negatively and the learners were highly dissatisfied with online teaching in the midst of the pandemic. This might be true for the students since they were hindered from giving their best as compared to their performance during the traditional face-to-face because their movements were limited. Those who did not have the resources during the pandemic were negatively affected by the new mode of learning.

Difficulty in the Use of CNSC Learning Management System

Another concern that was encountered by students and faculty was the use of CNSC LMS. Aside from the weak wifi connectivity which made it difficult to access, both of them find it as non-user friendly as compared to other LMS like Google Classroom which was easier to explore and learn. Both students and faculty found the LMS of the institution that it had lots of features that were quite complex. It was also their concern that it was then recommended by the administration to use their own LMS as the faculty could be monitored by the Dean or by the CNSC president himself if they were using it or not. It is a platform used for asynchronous classes which contains everything that students who are enrolled in a particular subject would know the activities that the faculty have uploaded for the students to do. They would be able to know the information like their grades and how far they have performed in a particular class.

CNSC is the pioneer among the HEIs in the Bicol Region which established an LMS. It helped other institutions to put up their own LMS. The ICS which was the in-charge of developing the LMS did their best to use it in their classes. Instructors in this college used this and found that it was easy to use. But the majority of students and faculty find it very inconvenient and difficult to use which is why it is non-user friendly, and very disappointing to use.

Activities uploaded here could be restricted at first, as faculty gives restriction on the time that the students could access the information, and the time limit as to submission of output. Even though the students could do the activities at their own pace and time, they still have to know the limitations, as faculty, to ensure that students will do it and will be able to pass it with their agreed time, although the faculty gave considerations to the students if the activities will not be submitted on time due to valid reason. The use of the CNSC LMS during the 1st semester AY 2020-2021 was a big concern not only to the students, but to the faculty as well. As stated by a student-respondent;

> Ma'am, na-experience naming sobrang buggy at saka Ma'am sa LMS po kasi,
>
> wala pong notifications..kung saan Ma'am, hindi kami nano-notify kung meron na bang pinost si teacher or professor na mga Gawain unlike po sa Google Classroom. {S1}

(Ma'am…We experienced being upset, and Ma'am..in LMS..there's no notification..we were not notified if our teacher had posted activities hindi po katulad in Google Classroom. {S1})

Even the faculty were aware of the issue on difficulty in the use of LMS. As what faculty number 1 said;

Noong unang gamit nong Learning Management System, most of the students were expressing na they cannot access. Mahirap daw i-access especially if they are using data. Although I uploaded some materials lalo na noong first semester 2020-2021 some materials dun sa ating LMS. However, yung mga students hindi nila ina-access for the reason nga they are using data, it's difficult to access, ganun. Even the administration agreed that palibhasa bagong gawa tapos may issue tayo sa internet connectivity, medyo nahirapan iyong iba in terms of technical aspect. {F1}

(When we first used the Learning Management System, karamihan sa mga estudyante ay nagsabing hindi nila ito magawang gamitin. It was difficult na mapasok lalo na kung ang gamit mo ay mobile data. Kahit na nag-upload ako ng ibang materials especially noong unang semester 2020-2021, iyong ibang materials in our LMS..pero iyong mga estudyante, they did not access it dahil nga sa gamit nila eh data. Kahit na ang administration ay sumasang-ayon na because this was new, and there was issue on internet, others experienced difficulty pagdating sa aspeto ng teknikal. {F1})

Due to the difficulty of the use of CNSC LMS mainly because it was hard to manipulate and navigate, the majority of the students and faculty did not use that. Instead, they opted to use Google Classroom which was very easy to use. A faculty could upload in this learning platform putting some restrictions for the purpose of making the students manage their time to deliver what was due to be submitted. The LMS was good if it were user-friendly, so as to be used by the majority of the stakeholders.

The study of Cavus (2006) revealed that LMS could become more efficient if it were enhanced by a collaborative learning tool. At the same time, Nguyen (2021) tested the relationship between the interaction provided by learning management tools and learners' satisfaction. For the university's side, this research contributed to providing information relating to students' perceptions which could help the improvement of the learning management system afterward. The way all materials were displayed was very important to the LMS's effectiveness. It was not only about the amount or quality but also the well-organized structure that allowed students to reach all in such an easy way.

CNSC LMS could have been effective if there were good internet connection, and if the faculty and students were better trained to explore its features. It was good if the stakeholders will be able to use the institution's own LMS in order to support the objectives of CNSC to have its own platform.

Inasmuch as the faculty would like to take heed on the appeal of the administration to use the institution's LMS, they were hindered from using it as they found it not user-friendly, as there were a lot of keys to press before one could do a certain task.
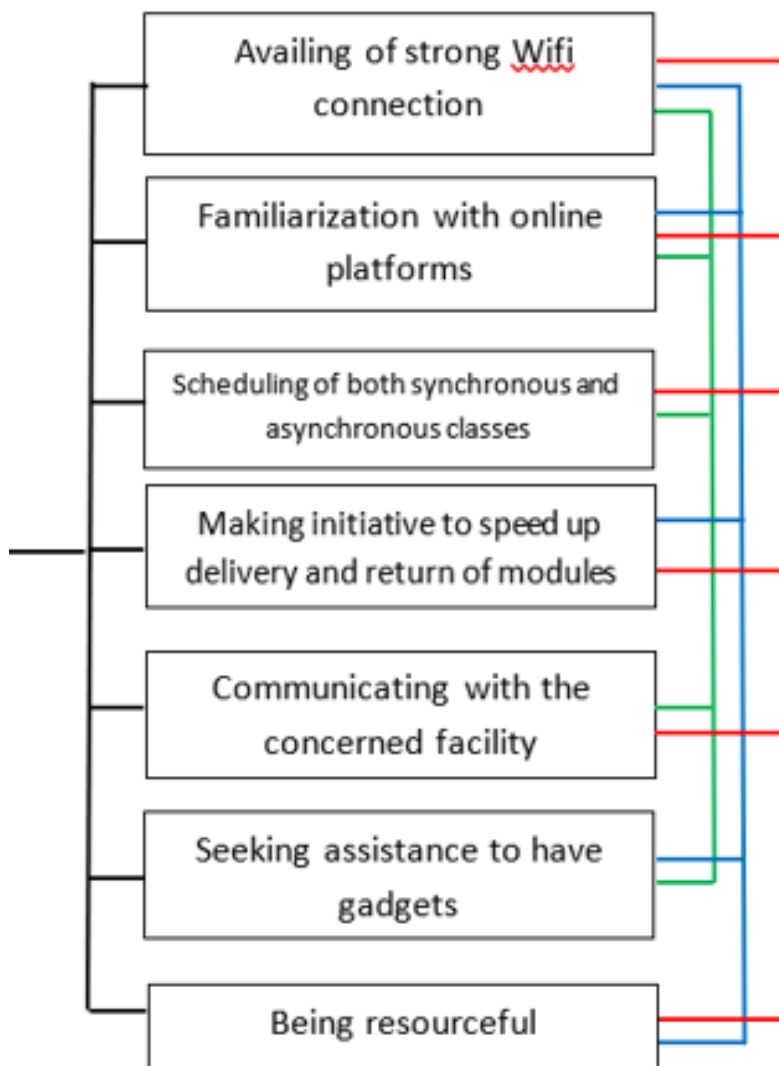
Strategies Used to Address the Issues and Concerns Encountered on the Use of Flexible Learning

The impact of Covid 19 was magnanimous and no one was spared from the lashes that it gave to human-

ty. Amidst these challenges, stakeholders of Camarines Norte State College were able to overcome the issues and concerns. They used some adaptive behaviors or strategies to address such issues and concerns encountered on the use of flexible learning.

The figure below is the Thematic Analysis Paradigm that shows the generated themes on the strategies used by the students, faculty, and administration to address the issues and concerns that they experienced on the use of flexible learning. These are the availing of a strong wifi connection, familiarizing with online platforms, scheduling of both synchronous and asynchronous modes, making initiative to speed up the delivery and return of modules, communicating with the concerned faculty, seeking assistance to have gadgets, and being resourceful. These strategies made them cope with the challenges brought about by the issues and concerns that the participants experienced during the pandemic.

Strategies used to address the issues and concerns encountered on the use of flexible learning

Figure 4. Thematic Analysis Paradigm on Strategies Used to Address the Issues and Concerns

Availing of Strong Wifi Connection

The root cause of all the issues and concerns encountered by the stakeholders in the conduct of flexible learning was the poor internet connection. Since they had to keep up with the demand of time, they did a

lot of adjustments and moved mountains just to secure better internet connectivity. Availing of strong wifi connection was the strategy used by the three groups of respondents to address the issue on poor internet connectivity.

The students were the ones who were so much affected by the lack of it especially in joining their online classes. For those who did not have internet connection resorted to go for Piso net or buy mobile data. Just what students no. 1 stated:

> They try to magpa-load na lang po and to have mobile data po para makapag-attend po sa klase namin. 'Pag naka-experience po kami ng unstable connection, nagpi-pm po kami sa group chat at nasabi po kami ng "Ma'am, we'll try to reconnect po or to rejoin"…gano'n po…{S1}
>
> (Nagsubok din po sila to use load instead, at mag-mobile data to attend our class. Whenever we experience po ng hindi maayos na koneksyon, we sent direct message to our group chat, and we informed that…Ma'am, subukin po naming makakonekta ulit…things like that…{S1})

Student no. 2 added:

> Uhmmm…dito po sa amin noon, nagbibili ako ng Piso wifi ticket...nabili na po ako ng maramihan ng ticket agad kasi nagkakaubusan po eh….{S2}
>
> (Uhmm…back home then...I bought Piso wifi tickets…I bought in bunch, so as not to experience out-of-stock situation…{S2})

The faculty had the same strategy in dealing with poor internet connection, just like what faculty no. 5 said:

> I also struggled with internet connection, that's why I made use of data. {F5}
>
> (Nahirapan din po ako sa internet, kaya gumamit na rin po ako ng {mobile} data. {F5}).

On the other hand, the administration dealt with poor internet connection by granting faculty with free cell cards, signing a MOA with DICT for free wifi, and as a long-term effect, submitting a proposal to CHED on Smart Campus to improve internet connectivity. They believed that all the issues and challenges experienced by the stakeholders was related to the issue of poor internet connection.

For the long-term solution, A1 submitted a proposal to CHED for a Smart Campus that will improve the internet connectivity and set up an information highway in CNSC connecting the six (6) campuses. As he put it:

> …CNSC submitted a proposal to CHED about sa Smart Campus amounting to 25 million…that will improve the internet connectivity and will set up an information highway sa loob ng CNSC para connected na ang anim na campuses, so we will be able to remove the digital divide between the faculty and students…. {A1}
>
> (Ang CNSC ay nag-submit ng proposal sa CHED tungkol sa Smart Campus na nagkakahalaga ng 25 million….na makapagpapaunlad ng pagdaloy ng internet, at makapagbigay ng maayos na impormasyon to

> connect the 6 campuses of CNSC para mawala ang agwat teknolohikal ng mga guro at mga estudyante…. {A1})

The action of the administration to be part of Smart Campus is a good way to address the digital divide. In addition, they also resorted to have the issuance of cell cards for the faculty approved by the Board of Trustees thru the Faculty Trustee.

> Nagpa-approve po ang ating Faculty Trustee ng cell card para sa ating faculty para may magamit po sila at nabigyan po ang ating faculty for 1st semester 2020-2021. Another long term solution that the administration did was to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with DICT in which the stakeholders have been enjoying the free use of it. {A3}

> (Our Faculty Trustee was able to have approval for the issuance of cell cards to be used by the faculty for 1st semester 2020-2021. Isa pang pangmatagalang solusyon na ginawa ng administrasyon ay ang pagpirma sa isang kasunduan sa DICT na kung saan ay nagagamit na ito ng libre ng mga taga-CNSC. {A3})

According to A2:

> We signed a MOA with DICT for us to have the free wifi which was installed on the six campuses of CNSC. {A2}

> (Pumirma kami ng DICT sa MOA para sa libreng gamit ng wifi na ikinabit sa anim na mga kampus ng CNSC. {A2})

In the work of Abante (2021), he stated that interviews revealed that each sector has a problem in internet connectivity. Specifically, public school teachers were challenged by the scarce resources of the students and unresponsive parents. The students bought pre-paid load and use mobile data, or availed of piso wifi ticket to at least catch wifi signal. Internet connection dictates the quality of what will happen to any online class. Even though the students would like to have active participation, and despite the readiness and enthusiasm of the faculty to give them lessons that would add to the quality of learning that they would get, if the reception of internet is poor, then their objectives will not be achieved as what is expected.

Familiarizing with Online Platforms

With regard to the struggle in the use of online platforms, the students and faculty agreed among themselves to utilize a user-friendly platform for them to interact, and upload and download the activities. A lot of different platforms abound in social media wherein they were beneficial in the conduct of online learning using teaching strategies. The most common and user-friendly of those were Zoom or Google Meet. The Google Classroom was one of the learning management systems that was used by the students and faculty for their asynchronous mode of learning.

For student 2, he was able to adapt to different platforms by exploring and exposing himself to different applications as narrated below:

> For me, ma'am, I exposed myself to different platforms used by the teachers po like how you can manipulate Google Classroom..ganun po. {S2}

> (Ako po, ma'am…marami po akong ginamit na iba't-ibang platform na
> ginagamit po ng mga guro tulad ng kung paano po ito gagamitin tulad
> ng Google Classroom….like that. {S2})

In such cases of difficulty in adaptability to the platform used, they communicate the difficulty to the teacher. They suggested to them if they could use Google Meet instead as that is the easiest platform for them.

> Uhm…ano po…for me po… communication po ma'am,.
> Halimbawa po nagkakaproblema ako sa platform or sa strategy ng
> ginagamit ng teachers namin, sinasabi ko po sa teacher. {S3}
> (Uhm…for me..It is communication, ma'am. For example, if I
> encountered problem on the use of platform or in the strategy used
> by the teachers...eh.. I informed the teacher. {S3}

Faculty no. 2 said that:

> At first, I was so hesitant in trying different online platforms. So,
> what I did was self-taught. I was into Youtube most of the time,
> trying to teach myself different ways to access online teaching and
> learning. I did gradually or step-by-step the use of Google
> Classroom, Google Meet, even the LMS before. Umattend din kami
> sa mga webinars na meron sa internet. {F2}
> (Noong una, nag-aalangan ako na gumamit ng ibat-ibang platforms.
> Naggawa ako ng paraan para matuto sa sarili kong pamamaraan.
> Palagi kong ginagamit ang Youtube, at tinuruan ko ang sarili ko na
> matuto ng ibat-bang paraan para sa pagtuturo. Unti-unti kong inaral
> ang Google Classroom, Google Meet, at kahit LMS. We also
> attended the webinars offered on internet) {F2}

The administration struggled as well on the use of technology as to how to conduct teleconferencing via cloud platform, same with the experiences of students and faculty. In this case, they also allowed the use of other platforms, provided the logistics, and issued Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for the conduct of 1st semester AY 2020-2021. Although they encouraged the use of CNSC LMS, the faculty were not prohibited in using the platform which they thought would be efficient and effective in the conduct of flexible learning modality, which eventually were Google Meet, and Google Classroom.

> We encouraged the faculty to use only one teleconferencing platform
> conducive to majority which is Google Meet instead of Zoom which
> requires payment, as well as the others. {A1}
>
> (Inengganyo namin ang mga guro na gumamit na lang ng isang
> platform na mas kayang gamitin ng nakararami...Iyon eh yung Google
> Meet sa halip na Zoom na kailangang bayaran katulad ng iba. {A1}).

Thakker, SV et al. (2021) posited that on a five-point Likert scale, the available e-learning platforms garnered ratings ranging from 2.81 to 3.46. Google meet was the most preferred platform. However, with a net promoter score (NPS) of 30.36, Microsoft Teams emerged as the most satisfying platform. Technical shortcomings clubbed with psychological and biological factors were found to be taking a toll on e-learning.

Kirana (2020) believes that Learning Management Systems integrate the learning materials and human resources systems, but cannot provide human interaction in real-time. Teleconferencing platforms allowed communication in real-time, but cannot integrate the learning materials and human resources systems. In order to optimize real-time interaction in the learning management system, a teleconference-oriented learning management system is proposed.

Scheduling of Both Synchronous and Asynchronous Modes

Online class could either be synchronous or asynchronous mode. Synchronous class happens live with actual interaction by people specifically students and faculty using a teleconferencing platform which could either be via Zoom or preferably using Google Meet. The good thing about this is that one could ask questions or clarifications which could have outright answers as they are in the proper forum to discuss a topic.

On the other hand, asynchronous mode happens when teachers upload learning materials, or activities for the students to do at their own pace, and time. That is the preferred mode by the majority of the students as they could choose the best time to do it having good internet connection. The students and faculty managed to address the issue on the conduct of purely synchronous or asynchronous mode. During the time that only synchronous or asynchronous was the only mode that was conducted by the faculty, the students relayed this matter to the professor concerned through their group chat in the messenger. Scheduling of synchronous and asynchronous classes was then agreed upon between the two stakeholders. The established rapport between students and faculty helped them achieve better communication among themselves.

A student corroborated the statement:

> Para makapag-attend po, meron na po kaming proper schedule kung ano po talaga yun ano..uhm..synchronous class namin and once a week naman po sa asynchronous classes namin. {S1}
>
> (For them to be able to attend, we had iskedyul po for what it really was…uhm…synchronous po at isang araw sa isang linggo naman po ay asynchronous naman.{S1}

A faculty said:

> We conducted synchronous class once a week and the rest of the sessions were asynchronous. {F1}
>
> (Meron kaming isang araw na synchronous sa isang Linggo at asynchronous na ang iba pang araw.) {F1}

According to an administrator:

> It is for the faculty to strategize what is good for the class. A lot of participants in Google Meet could share their thoughts through chat box, and the faculty could read them, so as to motivate them as well. At the start of the orientation process, the faculty and the students agree on a particular day of the week as to what day is for the synchronous class, and the days for the asynchronous class. {A3}
>
> (Nasa mga guro ang paggawa ng paraan kung ano ang mabuti sa klase. Marami sa mga sumasali sa googlemeet ang nakakapag-share sa pamamagitan ng chat box, at mababasa ito ng mga guro na makakapagbigay sigla rin ito. Sa simula ng orientation, ang mga

guro at estudyante ay nagkakaroon ng kasunduan kung anong araw ang para sa synchronous, at may mga araw din para sa asynchronous. {A3}

As cited by Higley (2013) in his article, there are strengths and weaknesses to both designs. Some students like a synchronous online learning environment because they need face-to-face instruction. For other students, an asynchronous online learning environment provides more time to consider all sides of an issue before offering their own educated input. Both learning learning types have very unique benefits and limitations to online learning. Er et al. (2009) suggests that in order to overcome these limitations the two learning types should be integrated and utilized to support student needs within an online learning environment called blended learning.

Time management is a catalyst to adapt to the new normal. With all the rudiments that require online classes, one could drown from so much activities to do, and need time to familiarize oneself in tackling the difficulties met in online learning. With the blatant coming of Covid 19, everybody was expected to adapt to the new normal. Adaptability was the name of the game. Those who could not adapt would be left behind. Majority of the respondents agree that they need time management. They need to allocate time to plan out their activities.

Initiatives to Speed up Delivery and Return of Modules

Modules or the learning materials are indispensable to some students especially if they do not have the resources to attend the online class. These materials are their source of information for the lessons that the class is having. On the part of the faculty, providing good learning materials or modules would give their students the lectures that are needed for them to understand the lesson.

In a class during the beginning of the semester, the faculty conducted a survey what mode of learning the students opted to have whether online or modular. Those who did not have the gadget, and no internet connection chose to avail of the learning materials/modules. These are prepared and packed in an envelope by the faculty concerned, to be consolidated at the Dean's Office for delivery to the LGUs concerned.

Due to the need to consolidate all the learning materials/modules prepared by the professors for simultaneous delivery to the LGUs concerned, technically the delivery was somewhat late from the time that they were supposed to be picked up by the students for them to be at pace with their classmates' lesson for the specified week. To lessen the effect of inefficient delivery of modules, faculty and students had devised some initiatives to speed up the delivery of the materials. Some faculty personally brought it to the students, or sent it through courier to make sure it would reach the students on time.

As some faculty sent the learning materials/modules thru courier, student 1 said:

> Iyong sa sobrang bagal kung paano nya makukuha yung learning materials..ginawa po ng teacher namin ay kinuha yung address nya at contact number tapos pina-LBC po. { S1}
>
> (Because of so much delay as to when the learning materials could be received…our teacher got the address, and contact number [of the student], then was sent thru LBC.. {S1}

Since the students then were not allowed go to out of the house due to age restriction, concerned student's representative of age would pick it up from the specified place. That was one of the strategies that was used.

> …So ipinapakuha po nya during the time na kailangan nyang i-claim, at i-submit ang naunang module. Others did not avail of modules anymore, and opted to find ways to attend online class. {S2}
>
> (The student sent someone to claim the module, as well as sent the previous module. Iyong iba eh hindi na nag-avail ng module, at mas pinili na mag-attend ng online class. {S2})
>
> Ginawa po ng teacher namin is kinuha yung address nya, contact number tapos pina LBC po, medyo natuwa lang po kami kase siya pa po mismo yung gumawa ng way para mas mapabilis ung pagbigay ng modules. {S1}
>
> (What our teacher did was to get the student's address, and contact number, then sent to LBC. We were somewhat happy because the faculty was the one who initiated to hasten the delivery of modules. {S1}).

Some representatives of the students were allowed to claim the modules at the school. Others decided to opt for modular mode.

> Sa experience po ng mga kaklase ko, mas pinili na lang po nila mag-online rather than modular approach po. {S3}
>
> (As experienced by my classmates, they chose to go online kaysa modular approach. {S3})

With all these inconveniences experienced both by students and faculty, the administration gave rich considerations to the students, as stated in the IRR. During the AY 2020-2021, the administration exhausted all the possible means to alleviate the difficulty that the students and faculty had undergone. In this regard, the administrator had this to say:

> Sa distribution ng modules, CNSC provided vehicles para makarating ang mga modules prepared by the faculty members sa ating mga estudyante... {A1}.
>
> (In the distribution of modules, nagpagamit ang CNSC ng mga sasakyan to deliver the modules na ginawa ng mga guro for the students…{A1}).

Such particular initiative of the administration helped to alleviate the concern on the delivery of the modules or the learning materials to the stakeholders.

Based on the study conducted by Ambayon (2020), modular instruction is more operative in the teaching-learning method as equated to usual teaching approaches because in this modular approach the students learn in their own stride. It is unrestricted self-learning panache in which instantaneous reinforcement, a comment is provided to practice exercise which stimulates the students and builds curiosity in them.

Good Communication among Faculty and Students

On the part of the students, dissatisfaction with the grades that they receive could happen. This could result to harbouring grudge against their professors. In this case, the students were able to address their dissatisfaction on the grades that they received by respectfully communicating it with the concerned professors. In that manner, the faculty was able to tell on what areas the students missed out.

On the other hand, the students were able to remind the professor if they had submission which the faculty may have missed out recording. In doing so, the professor concerned and the students were able to settle the matter, although for some students who were not satisfied with the grades received, they just kept mum about it, or told it to their friends instead of directly telling it to the professors.

This issue could have been prevented if there was grade consultation that happened among the students and faculty. In doing so, the students would be enlightened as to what grade they would have expected if the professor had given them update on each grading period. Good line of communication is important in most of cases as it will enlighten the minds of the students on how they got grades that they thought they do not deserve. At the same time, that is the opportunity for the faculty to explain to the students as to how they have arrived at such computation, thus clearing all the clouds of doubt between the two parties.

Student 1 said:

> Nire-recommend ko po sa kanila to try to communicate doon sa professor na nagbigay ng ganoong grades..at maging respectful when communicating. {S1}
>
> (I recommended to them na makipag-usap with their professor who gave such grades…and to be magalang sa pakikipag-usap.{S1})

There are other students whom once they heard about this kind of sentiment gave advice to reflect on one's responsibility, whether they really have given their best or not. As what Student 3 said,

> "Uhm..for me po sinasabihan ko po silang kelangan nilang mag-reflect kung gumagawa ba sila….ginagawa ba nila yung mga dapat gawin..yun mga responsibility as a student or kung nag-comply ba sila. {S3}
>
> (Uhm..sa akin po I told them that they needed to reflect if they really do it…Were they doing the things that they should have done…those responsibilities ng isang estudyante kung ginagawa ba nila…{S3})

Good communication is important to clear things up. Future problem is avoided once it becomes clear to both ends. Living in pandemic resulted to inconveniences in doing the activities. During the 1st semester of AY 2020-2021, some of the students were not able to submit the required activities due to reasons like internet connectivity, lack of gadgets, bulk of activities to accomplish in different subjects, and other reasons that the students had. In this case, they tell the professor politely the reason why the submission of output is late. Student 1 said;

> "Hindi naman po ako naka-experience ng late submission, pero may mga kaklase po ako na naka-experience. Ang ina-advise po namin is ano…to communicate with the subject teacher nila…or mag-reason out sila kung bakit na-late…communication po is the key to that problem. {S1}

(I didn't experience ng huli sa ibinigay na oras na pag-submit but I had classmates who experienced such. What I advise them was…makipag-usap sa guro nila..to give the reason why they submitted late. Komunikasyon po ang susi sa paglutas ng problema. {S1})

In this regard, majority of the faculty had given them all the considerations that they could give, even extending the due date to give ample time to the students to cope with the requirements. Faculty 1 said;

> Ang isang ginawa kong strategy ay yung integrative assessment na halimbawa, yung isang subject is also requiring a research output or analysis or reflection. Students will prepare only one output which will be evaluated or assess nong dalawang subjects. {F1}
>
> (One strategy I made was integrative assessment…like all subjects which were requiring research output or analysis or repleksyon ay gagawa ang estudyante ng isang output na susuriin at mamarkahan ng mga guro sa mga subject na iyon. {F1})

The administration was aware of some of the faculty who were not that considerate to some of the students, that was why they issued a memo reminding the faculty to consider the submission of outputs by the students.

> Nagkaroon po dati ng issue regarding sa mga faculty na nagpapapasa agad ng requirements… hinihigpitang masyado may deadline agad, so the office issued a memo regarding flexibility in terms of submission… {A4}
>
> (There was an issue tungkol sa mga guro who demanded na ipa-submit na ang mga ipinapagawa nila…so strict… giving deadline that was early kaya nagpalabas ang opisina ng memo tungkol sa flexibility ng pag-submit. {A4})

Gibson (1992) affirms that exhibiting a positive and constructive attitude and effective listening skills, giving reflective feedback, asking open-ended questions, and engaging in joint goal-setting, will assist the supervisor in negotiating appropriate employee behavior during the appraisal interview. Just like in management, the faculty should listen to their students as to the difficulty that they encounter in doing their requirements, so that communication will be open for both of them. They should be able to extend help to their students for them to cope with their requirements. If the students feel that the faculty could understand them, they will be more willing to communicate with them. In return, the faculty would be able to guide them as to how they could cope with the submission of requirements.

Seek Assistance to have Gadget/s

The gadgets such as Smart Cellphone, laptop, desktop computer, or I-pad are very important for a person to go online. These are precious possessions of students and faculty to cope with online learning. But some of the students did not have a gadget which could be either be a cellphone or a laptop. Aside from they needed it for the online class, there were activities that they needed them to make a video of a certain activity, watch a video and make a reflection paper, those things made them need to have a gadget. Some students looked for scholarships which give financial support, or some looked for donor or sponsor for a cellphone or even a second-hand laptop.

The students and faculty were able to survive the inadequate gadgets to use. They sought assistance to have gadgets. Some of the students borrowed from their siblings, relatives, or their classmates. Others asked financial assistance from local government units. On the part of the faculty, they gave to administration their intention to avail of any help for them to have a new laptop of their own.

According to S1:

> For those students po na walang gadgets especially kung kailangan talaga siya sa specific activity or project, I, myself po, ma'am…nago-offer po ako ng help (lending his gadget). {S1}

> (Sa mga estudyante po without gadgets lalo na po if they need one [to use] dahil sa isang aktibidad or proyekto, ako po mismo...ay nagbibigay ng tulong [magpahiram sa kanila]. {S1}

Another student added:

> Iyong iba naman po na walang sariling gadget, nanghihiram na lang po sila sa mga classmates or relatives…Yung iba naman po naga-ask ng financial assistance from different local government units or nag-aaply ng iba't ibang scholarships para makabili rin po ng sariling gadget. {S2}
>
> (Others who did not have their own gadget borrowed from their classmates or sa mga pinsan. Some asked po ng tulong pinansyal mula sa iba't-ibang local government units or they applied various scholarships for them to buy their own gadget. {S2})

As for the administration as a strategy to this issue, they contacted an NGO based in Switzerland to donate 30 units of second-hand laptops which were distributed to the identified students thru a survey who were found to be the least fortunate than the rest, thus A1 put it:

> As for the faculty, iyong laptop kasama yan sa 25 million na Smart Campus fund kung saan nag survey ang CHED kung ilan ang faculty members kung bibilhan ng laptop kaya nag-submit ang CNSC ng data. {A1}
>
> (Bilang istratedyi sa usaping ito, kinontak po nila ang isang NGO sa Switzerland na kung saan ito ay nagbigay ng tatlumpung gamit ng laptop at ito po ay ipinamahagi sa mga pinakamahihirap na mga mag-aaral.Sa mga guro naman, the laptop is included in the 25 million Smart Campus fund wherein CHED conducted a survey as to how many are the faculty who need laptop, and CNSC submitted the data. {A1})

Another administrator uttered:

> Doon po sa mga faculty natin na merong concerns sa gadget, CNSC provides the equipment thru our computer laboratories..na anytime po pwede po sila makagamit ng computer…at internet para mai-deliver po ang online class. {A2}
>
> (Those faculty who have concerns on gadget, sila ay pinapayagan ng CNSC na gumamit ng computer laboratory, so that they can use the computer, and internet to deliver online classes. {A2})

Bazimaziki (2020) found that online teaching challenges them, hence jeopardizing the intended goal due to a number of factors such as limited or lack of ICT skills and resources which makes online learning during the COVID-19 lockdowns not inclusive. It is important for the faculty to be ICT literate to cope with the demands of online class, and for the students to have ICT skills in order to participate with the online activities that they have to make.

Being Resourceful

The different proclamations whether national or local brought inconveniences and gave a powerful impact on the lives of the respondents as it limited their movements and capacity which had effects on

the delivery of the teaching and learning process. For the students, they needed to be resourceful when their instructors require them to make a certain activity. When they were required to do a group project or performance, resourcefulness and creativity were needed for them to produce quality output.

The prohibition from conducting face-to-face mode prevented the students from making their group activities specifically the videos that they had to make challenged their wits and imagination as to how they would be able to come up with a group presentation despite doing it the virtual way. According to S1:

> Bale gumawa na lang po ng ibang paraan para makakuha ng available learning materials sa internet…at applications na pwede pong makatulong sa pag-conduct ng online class…{S1}
>
> (Done other ways to get available learning materials from internet…and applications that could be of help in conducting the online class…{S1})

On the other hand, the faculty had to become resourceful as well as to how they will conduct classes especially if it was a certain performance in Physical Education, or in TLE like cooking. The administration, on the other hand had to become resourceful and give the logistics needed to make sure that the academe ran well amidst the threat of getting the virus. They had to make sure that the people who were sent to deliver the modules to the LGUs, and the facilitation of acquiring supplies followed strictly the health protocols set by the Inter-agency Task Force (IATF).

In order to adapt to the effects of the different proclamations made by the government, the CNSC administration has this to say:

> In response sa mga issuances na yan, we transformed also CNSC following alternative work arrangement. Meron tayong mga empleyado na naka work from home, so they can still deliver iyong ini-expect sa kanilang output na nakaangkla dito sa mga issuances na ito. {A1}
>
> (Bilang pagtugon sa mga ipinalabas na proklamasyon, ang empleyado ng CNSC ay nag-work from home para maibigay pa rin nila ang output na kailangang ibigay nila. {A1})

Work from home was the set-up made for the faculty and staff to do what was due them to deliver. The faculty prepared the accomplishment report in the form of Certificate of Services Rendered (CSR) indicating what they have done everyday for the week including the activities that they have extended to the students to accomplish the flexible learning mode.

Douglas et al. (2020) worldwide have implemented strict controls on movement in response to the covid-19 pandemic. The aim is to cut transmission by reducing close contact (box 1), but the measures have profound consequences. Several sectors are seeing steep reductions in business, and there has been panic buying in shops. Social, economic, and health consequences are inevitable. Finding purpose in everything that people do is good better for them to motivate themselves why they do certain tasks. It pays when they appreciate having a purpose-driven life.

The administration was very supportive of the faculty and students in terms of logistics to lessen the burden that they have experienced during the pandemic. As what an administrator put it:

> In terms of adaptability po..of course from the start hindi po ganon kadali pero unti unti naman po eh nagkaroon ng adjustment. Even the

faculty… I know, na hindi po ganoon kadali but since the support of the administration is there, nagkaroon ng smooth implementation ang flexible learning. The faculty then were instructed to give all the understanding and flexibility that they could extend to the students for them to finish the semester. The faculty were given all the logistical support in order to lessen the burden that they might have encountered { A3}.

(Kung pag-uusapan eh pag-akma sa sitwasyon...syempre sa simula, it was not easy…but gradually, adjustment occured. Kahit ang faculty…alam ko that it was not that easy…but due sa suporta ng administrasyon, there was maayos na implementasyon ng flexible learning. Ang mga guro ay binigyan ng oryentasyon na lubusang ibigay ang pag-unawa para matapos ng estudyante ang buong semestre. Sila ay binigyan ng lahat ng suporta para mabawasan ang paghihirap na kanilang nararanasan) {A3}.

On the part of the administration, they allocated fund for the production of learning materials such as reams of bond paper, bottles of ink, and envelopes. A vehicle was provided to deliver the LMs to the LGUs where they have signed a MOA with. It was explained by Administrator 1 that;

Talagang nag-allocate ng pondo para sa production ng modyul ng ating mga guro for free lahat iyon…iyong gagamitin ng ating mga estudyante. Not only that, sa distribution ng modules, we provided also vehicle para makarating ang mga modules prepared by faculty members sa ating mga estudyante. {A1}

(There was an allocation of fund for the production of modules of the faculty for free….those that will be used by the students. Meron ding sasakyan, so that the modules will reach the students. {A1})

In this case, the management gave all the logistical support in order for them to successfully implement the flexible learning. They even forged a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Local Government Units (LGUs) to better facilitate the distribution of learning materials. It is in the IRR of CNSC as to how they should be delivered and retrieved. Before the students get the Learning Materials, they have to sign in the document, and then return the document for retrieval of CNSC. The purpose of this is for them to check the in and out of the documents and ensure that they will reach the students and retrieve the outputs of the students for recording of the faculty.

Castroverde and Acala (2021) affirmed that despite the threats of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers continue to serve by formulating modules as the learning guide of students. They also posited that the teacher becomes a facilitator in the development of the student, both as a member of their community and a member of their society (Martineau et al., 2020). However, Malipot (2020) stressed that teachers also air their problems on modular distance learning. Bagood (2020) highlighted that as front liners in the educational system, they have undergone various training and seminars to be more equipped in delivering better education amid the COVID-19 pandemic as it is a norm of the department to train teachers not just for professional growth but to become ready for unexpected circumstances.

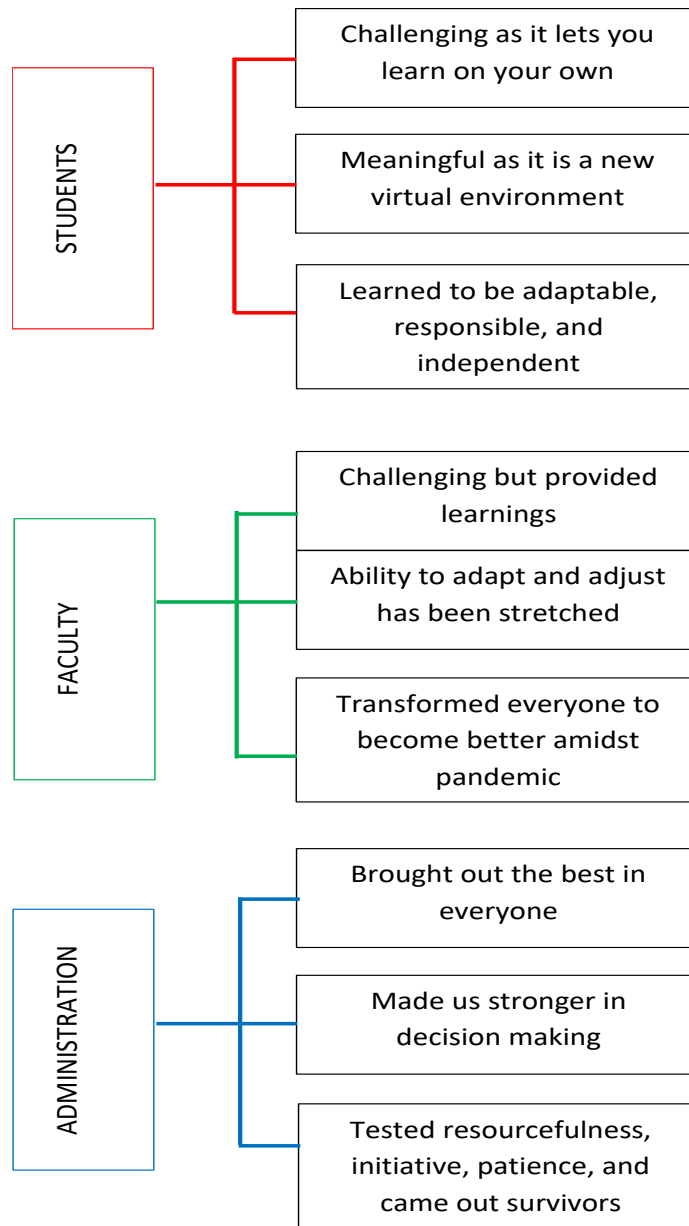**Insights Gained on the Use of Flexible learning**

Whenever people experience something that has impact on their lives, insights are gained from which they could say whether it has made them surrender to it, or have learned from it. Their experiences from flexible learning due to pandemic have surely made so much impact on how they perceive the experience. They might have gained negative or positive insights that have left an indelible mark in their thoughts and hearts.

The students, faculty, and administration of Camarines Norte State College had their own share of what everyone had experienced during the pandemic. It has given them the experience that somehow shaped their adaptability to changes. This gave them the experience to go out of their comfort zone which gave them different insights into how academic life had been especially during the onset of the pandemic which really tested their resiliency and adaptability.

Figure 5 shows the Thematic Analysis Paradigm on Insights Gained on the Use of Flexible Learning. It reflects the generated themes from the experiences of the students, faculty, and administrator respondents on the use of flexible learning.

The identified themes constituted positivity. The students viewed flexible learning as challenging, meaningful, and that it brought out the best in them as they became adaptable, responsible, and independent. The faculty were convinced that their experience on flexible learning was challenging but provided learnings. They also believed that they their ability to adapt and adjust has been stretched, and transformed everyone to become better amidst pandemic. As to the administrators, they made them stronger in decision making, tested their resourcefulness, patience, and came out survivors. To top it all, they are convinced that it brought out the best in everyone.

The students, faculty, and administrators have rich insights on how this pandemic molded them as individuals, and as a team. For some, it was definitely challenging as that was really a new experience which they did not have any choice but to bite the bullet, but they have appreciated it since they have become independent and made use of the opportunity for them to learn in their own pace and time. It was challenging because it let them learn on their own. Since it was a new normal setting, and there was a sudden shift, so guidelines on the implementation of flexible learning were unpolished, but they were able to go on with their academic life.

STUDENTS
- Challenging as it lets you learn on your own
- Meaningful as it is a new virtual environment
- Learned to be adaptable, responsible, and independent

FACULTY
- Challenging but provided learnings
- Ability to adapt and adjust has been stretched
- Transformed everyone to become better amidst pandemic

ADMINISTRATION
- Brought out the best in everyone
- Made us stronger in decision making
- Tested resourcefulness, initiative, patience, and came out survivors

Figure 5. Thematic Analysis on Insights Gained on the Use of Flexible Learning

Challenging

As encountered by the group of participants, they described their experience as challenging. Here was what Student 1 said,

> Dine-describe ko po ito as challenging…Kasi nung una po talaga, we are new in this new normal setting..Hindi natin alam kung paano ito tatakbo..habang tumatagal naman po is naa-adopt natin yung pagbabago don sa educational system natin wherein nabibigyan tayo ng opportunity to assess yung sarili natin bilang estudyante...parang sa flexible learning po, it gives everyone the opportunity to learn on your own pace po..what they need kung saan sila, kung paano, at kung paano, at kung kalian sila matututo. {S1}

(I describe this as challenging…At first, bago pa lang tayo sa normal na setting…We didn't know how this would run…As the days went by we adapt to changeswent by we adapt to changes sa edukasyon wherein students were given the opportunity to assess themselves…like in flexible learning..nabibigyan ng pagkakataon na matuto sa kanilang sariling oras..kung ano pangangailangan nila, when, where, and how they would learn. {S1})

Meaningful

For some, it was a meaningful experience as it gave them realization that unimaginable things could possibly happen like the flexible learning which has been used in other countries. It was a new virtual learning environment, where students learn at their own pace, and have gotten the opportunity for self-assessment. They also believe that learning does not happen only in the four corners of the classrooms, and they have realized that there is effective and applicable setup of distance learning in the Philippines. As Student 2 stated;

As a future educator po, it gives me an insight and learnings na as a future educator, may mga possibilities talaga na magkaroon ng shift…in education is laging nandiyan lang po..so, it teaches me a lot of lesson na dapat our learnings must not stop in the four corners of the classroom…there comes the pandemic.. And then, we embraced flexible learning..so we become more flexible, and we are exposed to different educational tools na iyong ibang bansa, ginagamit na sya and they find it effective pala…and dito sa Pilipinas, nakikita na din natin yung magandang effect niya rin sa education as a supplement, as a new virtual learning environment…na we can still continue education despite limitations. {S2}

(Bilang isang magiging guro, nagbigay po ito ng papanaw at katuruan that there are posibilities that there would be shift….that education is always there. Nagturo po ito sa amin na ang pag-aaral ay hindi lamang nakukuha sa apat na sulok ng eskwelahan…sa pagdating ng pandemic…niyakap natin ang flexible learning..at nalaman namin na ang iba't-ibang educational tools that other countries use, and they find it effective...and here in the Philippines, we have seen the good effect on education, at bilang ito ay isang bagong pamamaraan ng pagkatuto…na kaya nating ipagpatuloy ang edukasyon sa kabila ng mga limitasyon. {S2}).

Brought out the Best in Everyone

Respondents found something positive from the new normal situation. They have realized that there were good results gotten from their experiences in flexible learning. At the same time, such modality brought out the best in them as they learned to be adaptable, responsible, and independent. It transformed everyone to become better faculty, and better students. It brought out the best in them as it tested their resourcefulness, initiative, and patience. It made them stronger when it comes to decision-making. The key is adaptability to what is in there for everyone.

As what student 3 said:

> So for me…the flexible learning is timely and suitable po in this time po…natutunan ko na po na dapat mag-adapt po tayo..tinuruan din po tayo…especially po kaming mga estudyante na maging responsible and independent po..ma-practice po na matuto sa sarili po namin. {S3}
>
> (Para po sa akin…ang flexible learning ay napapanahon, at akma sa mga panahong ito. I learned to adapt..We were taught…we students to be responsible, and independent. {S3})

This was corroborated by the faculty. Just like what Faculty 5 shared;

> My experience during the first semester was somewhat challenging…but then again, the experience provided learnings especially on the use of platforms and other strategies in teaching. This time po, we are able to adapt to the flexible learning modality. {F5}
>
> (Ang karanasan ko noong unang semestre ay mapanghamon...subalit lahat ng natutunan ko ay nagmula lalo na sa paggamit ng ibang pamamaraan sa pagtuturo. Sa pagkakataon pong ito, nagawa po namin na umangkop sa flexible learning. {F5}).

That it is for the management to do actions for the sustainability of this mode of learning. The administrators for their part have their insights as well. That flexible learning made them stronger when it comes to decision making, and coming out victorious amidst the challenges by not just the flexible learning, but on how overcoming the test of time during the time of pandemic. It tested their resiliency and stood against pressure. In management, foresight is very important to a manager. As administrators, they have to have an advanced plan for the betterment of their stakeholders. One should not only act on what is before one's eyes but being well-prepared for it even the situation has not happened yet.

> Really, Covid 19 transformed everyone to become a better faculty member, better student who is able to cope with the challenge caused by the pandemic. It just brought out the best in us…{A1}
>
> (Ang Covid 19 ay binago ang lahat upang maging mabuting guro, mabuting estudyante para malampasan nila ang hamon ng pandemic. Ito ang pumanday sa atin upang mailabas ang galing ng bawat isa sa atin…{A1}).

It is a fact that you can test the ability of an administrator during difficult times and come out victorious. So, I could say that this first semester 2020-2021 really tested our resourcefulness, our initiative as well as our patience but then kahit po ganoon ang pinagdaanan natin, still we decided to keep going and survived. Flexible learning is a catalyst to avoid disruption of classes in the midst of the pandemic. Based on the results derived from the study, an intervention plan was formulated to address the issues and concerns encountered by the respondents in the implementation of Flexible Learning as an instructional approach at Camarines Norte State College.

Proposed Goal-Oriented Intervention Plan to Enhance the Use of Flexible Learning in CNSC

Matrix 1 shows the proposed goal-oriented intervention plan intended for Camarines Norte State College (CNSC). This is to enhance the use of flexible learning as an instructional approach, not only during a

pandemic but also when the situation calls for it such as a nationwide transport strike. This is to ensure that there would be undisrupted learning in times of occurrence of such a phenomenon.

Based on the identified issues and concerns that the three (3) groups of participants in this study encountered on the use of flexible learning, the researcher formulated this proposed intervention plan. This aims not only to enhance the use of Flexible Learning in the delivery of the lessons, but also to improve its implementation by the administrators, so that the stakeholders specifically the students and the faculty would have better flexible learning experiences. The proposed intervention plan will be useful to the students and faculty of the institution by improving their adaptability and readiness to the use of such instructional approach, and for the administration in managing its full implementation.

The output of this study will be endorsed to the Dean of the College for his endorsement to CNSC President. Finally, once approved, the intervention plan can be used by respective delivery units. This will be their guide in facilitating and implementing flexible learning during educational disruption for the safety of the stakeholders.

Intervention Plan to Enhance the Use of Flexible Learning as an Instructional Approach at Camarines Norte State College
By
NEMIA C. PUSE

RATIONALE

The Covid 19 pandemic has caused a 360-degree turn which made the lives of people different from what they had gotten used to doing. The academe was not spared from the effects of such phenomenon. Despite the turn of events, the administrators had to be in control to continue the operation of an academic institution like in the case of one of the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Bicol Region, Philippines called the Camarines Norte State College (CNSC).

This institution is the only SUC in the province of Camarines Norte with its main campus located at F. Pimentel Avenue, in the town of Daet. It houses the CAS, CBPA, ICS, and College of Engineering. Under its umbrella are five (5) satellite campuses located in different parts of the province such as Entienza Campus in Sta. Elena, CoTT in Panganiban, CaNR in Labo, IFMS in Mercedes Campus, and the College of Education Abano Campus.

CNSC, guided by the CHED Memorandum Order No. 04 Series of 2020 on the Implementation of Flexible Learning continues its operation during and after the new normal. Even though the DOH has declared that the pandemic is over, the numerous natural calamities, and other reasons such as national transport strike prompted the institution to resort to flexible learning mode.

In so doing, the researcher of this study "INQUIRY ON THE USE OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH: THE CAMARINES NORTE STATE COLLEGE" has conceptualized an intervention plan so as to enhance the use of flexible learning amidst the issues and concerns experienced by the students, faculty, and administrators themselves.

Matrix 1

GOAL-ORIENTED INTERVENTION PLAN
Goal 1. To address the digital divide

Indicator	Objectives	Action to be Taken	Time Frame	Expected Outcome	Persons Responsible	Resource Requirement
Poor internet connectivity	To ensure strong wifi connection to avoid delay and disconnection from online classes and other activities	Choose service provider that can deliver strong internet connection, and set up additional internet devices	Before the start of a semester until the end of Academic year	Choose service provider that has strong internet connection, and set up additional internet devices	Administrators Faculty Students	PPMP, Project Proposal, and Purchase request
Struggle in the use of online platforms	To keep abreast with latest features of different platforms	Attend trainings or webinars	Once every semester	Ease in using various platforms, thus increased output	CNSC administrators IT staff Faculty Students	PPMP IDP IPCR
Difficulty in the use of CNSC LMS	To motivate faculty and students to use CNSC LMS instead of other user-friendly LMS	IT staff should retool the capacity of the faculty and students on the use of LMS by periodic training. IT should revisit the software to upgrade to simplified manipulation of LMS making it	Before the start of every academic year	Hundred (100%) per cent of the faculty will utilize the CNSC LMS as the primary platform to use	CNSC BOT CNSC Administration IT Staff	Project Proposal IDP IPCR

		user-friendly.				

The first goal in the intervention plan is to eliminate the digital divide. As what the administrator found, the root cause of all the issues and concerns is the absence of strong wifi connection. This where the problem lies as the quality of the teaching and learning process is dependent on the quality of the internet connection.

The first indicator in the proposed intervention plan is the poor internet connectivity. To ensure strong wifi connection to avoid delay and disconnection from online classes and other activities. In this case, the administration should avail of the services of another wifi provider aside from the one being used to make sure that speedier connection will be secured. It could also be a backup connection whenever the other service provider suffers from technical glitches. It would also make a big difference in terms of quality of online classes if there would be a separate wifi exclusively for faculty. The students may find a place where there is free wifi which has strong internet connectivity, or take advantage of the PISO wifi, so as to lessen cost but get desirable result. The persons involved here are the administrators, faculty, and students, faculty, and administrators. The amount to be used here is reflected in the PPMP, backed up by proposal and purchase request.

The second indicator for goal 1 is the Struggle in the use of Online Platforms. All the stakeholders be it students, faculty, and administrators had experienced difficulty on the use of online platforms. Thus the expected outcome is the ease in using various platforms, thus increased productivity. The persons involved here are the administrators, faculty, students, and the IT staff. This should reflect in the PPMP, in the IDP of the faculty for them to develop themselves through attending various trainings and seminar. If would be better if they would echo to the students what they learned from those seminars. The services of the IT staff are very necessary in assisting the trainees.

Nowadays, being tech-savvy is surely a competitive edge of anyone from the others that would dictate the quality of learnings that a faculty could give to their students, as the latter are more well-verse than the faculty when it comes to technology. Needless to say but it is really an advantage if the faculty is at par or beyond the capability of their students when it comes to technology. Just like in the findings of the study that the three (3) groups of respondents had their own share of difficulty when it comes to the use of online platforms.

The third indicator is the difficulty in the use of CNSC Learning Management System. In the making of this platform, a large amount of money was spent in the making of the software. CNSC was the first Higher Education Institution which came up with its own LMS, thus extending help to other HEIs to set up their own. It would be a waste of resources if this program will not be used by its intended users for the reason that it is not user-friendly as compared to other platforms. It is just proper to motivate the faculty and students to patronize their own LMS, so it is just fitting for the IT staff to offer a new, simpler, user-friendly CNSC LMS in facilitating their asynchronous class. The use of CNSC LMS will satisfy the RQAT recommendations, and the ISO findings, so it is but proper for all faculty to retool themselves on the use of LMS.

Retooling of the faculty should be done before the start of the semester, so that they will be adept in using the LMS. Project proposal is needed to be made by the administrators, in which this training should be reflected in the faculty's IDP, and IPCR to assure compliance to the task as the target is 100% utilization of the CNSC LMS.

As for the long-term solution to eliminate the digital divide, the CNSC President submitted a proposal to CHED for a Smart Campus with the aim of improving the internet connectivity and set up an information highway in the institution connecting the six (6) campuses. According to him, he had submitted a proposal to CHED about the Smart Campus amounting to 25 million. In doing so, he envisioned that this will be able to remove the digital divide between the faculty and students.The action of the administration to be part of Smart Campus is a good way to address the digital divide. In addition, they also resorted to have the issuance of cell cards for the faculty for them to acquire better internet signal. This initiative was approved by the Board of Trustees thru the Faculty Trustee with the intention of somehow alleviate the faculty in terms of finances if they would buy them for themselves.

GOAL 2: To provide resources available for use

Indicator	Objectives	Action to be Taken	Time Frame	Expected Outcome	Persons Responsible	Resource Requirement
Inadequate gadget/s to use	To have available laptops or computers to be used during online classes	Seek assistance for the availability of laptops or computers for faculty and students to use	Before the semester starts until end of the academic year	Quality online class will be achieved	CNSC BOT CNSC administration Faculty Trustee Faculty Supply Officer	Project Proposal, Purchase Request

Goal 2 aims to provide resources available for use. The indicator is the inadequate gadgets to use. This study found that this issue was encountered not only by the students but by some of the faculty as well. According to one of the instructors, there was an incident that his laptop had fallen on the floor of the bus he was riding in going to Manila which made his gadget not so reliable to use. But the challenge was more on the students who did not have any gadget to use in the conduct of the online class.

The CNSC administration, through the Faculty Trustee may extend support to the faculty in terms of the purchase of laptops, whether it is payable or thru the issuance of a Property Acknowledgment Receipt (PAR). This would help the faculty to be efficient in using new laptops as theirs are already too old and dilapidated, and loaded with files that affect the effectiveness and efficiency of their gadgets. On the other hand, the Student Organization could coordinate with the administration as to how to facilitate the borrowing of the old laptops that the administration has, aside from the bulk of desk top computers that are stored at the computer laboratories. A project proposal is to be made by the Faculty Trustee. The expected outcome for this goal is to achieve quality online class utilizing usable available gadgets.

Goal 3. Facilitate easier delivery and receiving of modules or learning materials

Indicator	Objectives	Action to be Taken	Time Frame	Expected Outcome	Persons Responsible	Resource Requirement
Inefficient delivery of modules	To ensure prompt delivery and retrieval of modules to avoid delays in submission of output, and avoid delays in submission of grades	Have a staff-in-charge and make necessary measures to speed up the process	Once a month every 2nd Monday	Efficient and effective delivery and retrieval of modules	CNSC administrators Staff-in-charge Program Chairpersons Faculty Students	PPMP IPCR Delivery vehicle

Goal 3 aims to facilitate easier delivery and receiving of modules or learning materials. The inefficient delivery of modules, as well as their retrieval was an issue encountered by the students and faculty. By doing so, it causes the delay in the submission of outputs of the students to the faculty which in turn causes the delay in the computation and submission of grades. This has an effect on the encoding in the Student Information and Accounting System (SIAS).

During the pandemic, the administration had given all the logistical support to facilitate the production, delivery and exchange of the modules. But due to reasons like some of the faculty were not able to prepare them on time, the delivery was somewhat delayed. On the other hand, the students were not able to send back the previous modules that should have contained their answers to the previous activities given.

To ensure prompt delivery of modules, the Program Chairpersons should monitor the faculty to make sure that they will be able to produce the modules right on the target schedule. So that it will not be burdensome on the part of the faculty, a time frame is to be followed like once a month every 2nd Monday. This particular endeavor should be reflected on the IPCR of the faculty. There should be a staff-in-charge who will make the necessary measures to speed up the delivery and retrieval of the modules to the students concerned. Having a contact number of the recipients of the modules will contribute to the success of the exchanges of the modules.

Allocation of fund for the production of learning materials should be reflected on the PPMP of the Program Chairpersons to assure that the faculty will have enough resources for the year. It should include the logistics for the delivery vehicle such as gasoline expense, and the like. The faculty should contact the students as to the delivery, so as to prompt them as well that they should submit already the previous modules that were sent to them previously. For this matter, the collaboration of all the stakeholders concerns such as the faculty, students, program chairperson/s, and the staff-in-charge will make a difference in the easier and speedier exchange of modules.

Goal 4. Monitor faculty as to their adherence to scheduling of both synchronous and asynchronous modalities, and the grades released

Indicator	Objectives	Action to be Taken	Time Frame	Expected Outcome	Persons Responsible	Resource Requirement
Dissatisfaction with synchronous or asynchronous mode only	To conduct both synchronous and asynchronous classes for better understanding of the lessons	Have good communication between the faculty, and students and set definite schedules on when to conduct synchronous, and asynchronous classes; Chairpersons or the dean to be aware of the modes the faculty are using	Start until the end of a semester	Better appreciation and understanding of the lessons	Faculty Students Program Chairpersons Dean	Copy of teaching load
Dissatisfaction with the grades received	To facilitate open communication among students and faculty	Have an open communication among the students and faculty. Instructors are encouraged to give the assessment results to students, so that they are aware of the possible grade that they will receive	Entire semester	Produce a more transparent record of grades of the students	Faculty students	Class record

Goal 4 aims to monitor the faculty by the Program Chairpersons as to their adherence to scheduling of both synchronous and asynchronous modalities, and the grades released. This is to hinder future complaints from the students.

One of the indicators which is also an issue was the dissatisfaction of the students with synchronous or asynchronous classes only. This is so because synchronous mode is very necessary for the students to have conversation in real time, most especially to their professors. This is important as they would be able to get outright answers to any clarification that they want to have from the faculty concerned. At the same time, asynchronous mode is equally important as it is their way to comprehend more with the lessons, and to do the activities at their own pace and time. The two modalities complement one another. Without the other one, learning is not satisfactory.

As there was an agreement formed among the students and their instructors as to the sched of mode modalities, the Program Chairs would make a big impact to the faculty concerned if they would let them know that they are monitoring. The expected outcome is better appreciation of the lessons by the students.

The other one is the dissatisfaction of the students with the grades received. Since the line of communication is limited among students and faculty, the students are not able to gauge how they perform because some of the faculty do not update them of the result of the assessment. There are times that a certain faculty give activities that the students could not find time to do the activities of their other subjects, not to mention that they are not used to getting grades lower than what they are able to get during the face-to-face mode.

Having felt the presence of the Program Chairs, the faculty would also be on the guard of their actions in giving grades to the students if they know that the Chairs are reviewing or taking some notice on their submitted Grade Sheets. They would produce a more transparent class record of grades of the students. This task should cover the entire semester.

Goal 5. Set-up provisions and logistics to mitigate the effect of any pronouncement by the government

Indicator	Objective	Action to be Taken	Time Frame	Expected Outcome	Persons Responsible	Resource Requirement
Inconveniences caused by different proclamations to mitigate Covid 19	To ensure the smooth flow of delivery of teaching and learning process, and other	Coordinate with Provincial IATF officers	whole durationof academic year	Smooth flow of delivery of instructions, and other transactions	CNSC Administration Provincial IATF staff Faculty Students	National and Local Proclamations

	transactions					

Goal 5 aims to set-up provisions and logistics to mitigate the effect of any pronouncement by the government. The indicator inconveniences caused by different proclamations to mitigate Covid 19 is one of the issues encountered by the three (3) groups of participants which gave considerable impact in their academic life. For the students, they were not able to do the group collaboration as they were hindered from leaving their homes. Same thing with the faculty. They were hindered from conducting the lessons more effectively as compared to in-person meetings. As to the administrators, the delivery of services was affected.

The goal aims to have ready logistics and provisions with the expected output of having smooth flow of delivery of instructions, and other transaction. As to the action to be taken, there should be coordination with Provincial IATF officers in the whole duration of academic year as its time frame. The support of the CNSC administration to the faculty, and students and vice versa will help achieve the expected outcome of the goal.

It is said that the management should have a direction on what to do in case of issues and concerns. The administrators should be ready on whatever challenges that may come their way. One important function of management foresight. There should be provisions and logistics that are in place, so that when disruptions strike, the administrators are ready to cater to the needs of their stakeholders. In the case of CNSC, the administration then was able to show that they survived the rudiments that the pandemic has caused to the institution. With a head of the institution who was tested during a difficult time in his administration but came out victorious, validates the saying that true leadership is tested when someone is put in a very difficult position.

In this regard, the proposed goal-oriented intervention plan is a tool that may be of help to the enhancement of the implementation of flexible learning. The Program Chairpersons, or the Dean may see to it that the plan once approved may be monitored as to the implementation of the intervention plan for the common good of the institution.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study inquired on the use of flexible learning as instructional approach by the students, faculty, and administration of Camarines Norte State College. It was qualitative research documenting their experiences during the onset of the pandemic in the 1st semester of AY 2020-2021 when everyone was struggling with anything that had something to do with online learning, notwithstanding the challenges they met on the digital divide.

The data were gathered via Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) of three groups such as the students, faculty, and administration which were conducted separately. The researcher formulated the questions for the FGD to identify the issues and concerns experienced by the stakeholders, how these issues and concerns were addressed by them, the insights that they gained out of the experience, and the intervention plan that can be done to enhance the use and implementation of Flexible Learning.

Summary of the Findings

Based on the data gathered, the issues and concerns encountered on the use of flexible learning yielded

the following results:

1. The generated themes on the issues and concerns encountered on the use of flexible learning as experienced by the students, faculty, and administrators were the poor internet connectivity, struggle in the use of online platforms, inadequate gadgets to use, inconvenience caused by different proclamations to mitigate Covid 19, inefficient delivery of modules, dissatisfaction with synchronous or asynchronous classes only, dissatisfaction with the grades received, and difficulty in the use of CNSC Learning Management System (LMS) in which all of these challenges were experienced by the students. As to the faculty, they experienced the same issues and concerns with the exception of dissatisfaction with synchronous or asynchronous classes only, and dissatisfaction with the grades received. For the administrators, the poor internet connectivity, struggle in the use of online platforms, and the inconveniences caused by different proclamations to mitigate Covid 19 were the identified issues and concerns that they encountered by which those were also the common ones that were experienced by the three (3) groups of respondents.

2. The generated themes on the strategies used to address the issues and concerns as experienced by the three (3) groups of respondents were the availing of a strong internet connection, familiarizing with different online platforms, scheduling both synchronous and asynchronous classes, taking the initiative to speed up the delivery and return of modules, communicating with faculty concerned on the given grades, seeking assistance to have gadgets, and being resourceful.

3. The generated themes for the insights gained from the use of flexible learning by the three (3) groups of participants were challenging, meaningful, and that it brought out the best in them.

4. A goal-oriented intervention plan was formulated to enhance the use of Flexible Learning as an instructional approach.

Conclusions

Based on the answers of the respondents, it can be concluded that:

1. Poor internet connectivity was the major issue and concern that the respondents encountered in the use of flexible learning while the least was the dissatisfaction to grades received.

2. The issues and concerns experienced were addressed by eliminating the issue of poor internet by securing better internet connectivity.

3. The insights gained by the students, faculty, and administration were all positive as they view flexible learning as challenging, meaningful, and brought out the best in the respondents.

4. The formulated Goal-Oriented Intervention Plan could enhance the use, and better management and implementation of flexible learning by eliminating the digital divide, and updating themselves with technology for better adaptability to the new normal.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were in place:

1. In line with the poor internet connection, choose service provider that could offer high Mbps and/or set up additional internet devices. Difficulty in the use of CNSC Learning Management System could be dealt with by having a strong wifi connection, as well as retooling the faculty on technology by attending trainings/webinars which could make them adapt to the new normal, and thus become more productive. Efficient delivery and retrieval of modules could speed up if there would be a person in charge who

would look into the task. Communicating with the concerned faculty will address the issue of dissatisfaction with the grades received. The limitations to accessibility of resources like gadget could be addressed by seeking assistance from the institution. CNSC Learning Management System can be improved by making it more user-friendly and provide better wifi signal.

2. As to the strategies used to address the issues and concerns, the installation of additional internet sources would give way to a better wifi connection. It is also a safety net if the service of a certain provider fails, there is a backup connection for continuous flow to achieve better output. Periodic conduct of webinars is a good way to retool the capability in technology. Continued monitoring and tracking of the modules is good for speedier delivery and monitoring of the materials. Purchase of laptops for faculty through the Faculty Trustee could help them do the required tasks.

3. The positive insights that the stakeholders gained may be used as motivating factor to bring out the best in each and every one to increase productivity.

4. The formulated Goal-Oriented Intervention Plan may be used by the institution in the implementation of flexible learning in the midst of the pandemic, or other phenomena to avoid disruption of classes.

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