Continuing Education Through Modes of Learning in the Height of Pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic shocked the whole world and changed the educational landscape. To develop responsive solutions and continue with its mandate, University adheres to the Flexible Learning Modality (FLM). Behind the tedious preparation, it is essential to investigate the effectiveness of its implementation. This study aims to identify further experiences and problems encountered in implementing Flexible Learning. The study utilized a convergent design mixed-method research. The research instrument was developed based on the guidelines for implementing FLM at the University. The result shows that the guidelines were mostly implemented, although there are hindrances in the full implementation. There was an inconsistent internet connection and problems acquiring advanced technology for learning. However, it is notable in the parents' comments that they are thankful to the University for finding ways for their children to continue their education amidst the pandemic.

Keywords: flexible earning, pandemic, education

INTRODUCTION

Even before the pandemic brought about by COVID-19, many countries around the world were already engaged with flexible learning. Over the last 10 years, flexible learning has gained increased popularity in Western countries (Gachago et al., 2018) as a response to the increasing demand for flexible course offerings needed by many individuals who have other personal or social responsibilities that make it difficult for them to be on a full-blown campus-based class. Besides, educators nowadays have realized that 21st century students are much different from before and their needs are diverse and complex.

Despite this trend and scenario in global education, the Philippines is just starting to be open with the idea of a few elite private schools and higher institutions offering online education that is nearing the idea of flexible learning. Until the COVID-19 pandemic shocked the whole world and brought changes not only to the way people had to live but also to the economy and the educational landscape and system globally. It has been an advantage to other developed countries that they already have the mechanism and the resources to provide education amidst crises and pandemics. The Philippines has responded to the call of the times by implementing lockdowns to stop the spread of the virus. But while schools were closed because

of the community quarantine, education had to continue, but this time it would be in different modalities. Department of Education (DepEd) termed it "blended learning," while Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) called it "flexible learning."

As a Higher Education Institution (HEI), it is the duty of Bulacan State University (BulSU) to provide and deliver quality instruction to its students amidst the pandemic brought about by COVID-19. To come up with responsive solutions and continue with its mandate, BulSU adheres to the call of CHEd in using the Flexible Learning Modality. If the goal is to deliver quality education that is sensitive to the needs of the current situation, BulSU must be innovative in performing its role and complement the needs of the students. In its initial offering, BulSU came out with three different Flexible Learning Modalities; Synchronous Learning (SL), Asynchronous Learning (AOL), and Remote Printed Learning (RPL). Behind the tedious preparation, it is essential to investigate the effectiveness of its implementation as well as the factors that might have boiled down to the smooth transition since in the Philippines, there are no studies that describe the utilization of and current capacity for online learning (Baticulon et. al., (2020). Moreover, the unplanned, rapid and uncertain duration of the approach presented challenges at all academic levels that information about best practices is limited to guide such abrupt transitions (Armstrong-Mensak et. al., 2020). Joaquin et. al. (2020), found that despite the innovations made by Philippine HEIs in terms of alternative learning modes and technologies for delivering education, there are still gaps and challenges in their responses.

This study aims to further identify experiences and problems encountered in the implementation of Flexible Learning that may serve as a precedent in making the BulSU community and its system more resilient, productive, competent, and more sensitive toward the plight of its students.

The study will evaluate the guidelines for the implementation of Flexible Learning Modalities (FLM) at Bulacan State University with the following objectives:

1. measure the impact of the pandemic and the sudden switch of learning modality;
2. identify common problems and mitigations in the effective implementation;
3. evaluate the different factors (efficiency, effectiveness, opportunities, and challenges) that could have commenced due to the challenging situations; and
4. formulate possible interventions and more sustainable solutions that could benefit BulSU and other HEI towards innovative actions to the current and future problems in case the pandemic may prolong.

Research Problem

1. How may the implementation of the guidelines of flexible learning by the students, teachers, and parents be described in terms of:
    1.1. Role of the Administrators
    1.2. General Rule
    1.3. Online Session
    1.4. Modules and Classwork
    1.5. Attendance
    1.6. Assessment
    1.7. Feedback
    1.8. Agreement for Flexible Learning
2. What are the lived experiences of the students, teachers, and parents on the implementation of flexible learning?
3. What framework may be developed to assist the students, teachers, and parents in the implementation of flexible learning?

METHODOLOGY

The study covered all the colleges of the main and external campuses of Bulacan State University had 208 faculty, 3,649 students, and 2, 057 parents as respondents. The study was conducted at the end of the

first semester of the curriculum year 2020-2021 by evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of its implementation. The study also records the lived experiences of the respondents. The study utilized a convergent design mixed-method research. Quantitative data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire that evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of FML. Qualitative data were gathered through a set of interview questions to identify the lived experiences encountered by the respondents in the implementation of FML.

The research instrument was developed based on the guidelines for the implementation of FLM at the University. Experts were invited for the validation of the instrument. A letter to the Chancellor of the main and external campuses was formulated and signed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs for dissemination.

Data gathered was analyzed and subject to analysis and interpretation for the realization of the objective of the study. The level of implementation is assessed using the following scale: 3.25 – 4.0 All the time/Completely Implemented; 2.5 – 3.24 Most of the time/Mostly Implemented; 1.75 – 2.40 Some of the time/Implemented; 1 – 1.75 Not at all/Not Implemented. Content analysis will be used to treat the information gathered from the interview questions with the use of manual coding.

RESULTS

The level of implementation of flexible learning guidelines mentioned the different sections of the guidelines for the students, faculty, and parents. The role of the administrators discusses the promotion of the flexible learning modalities offered by the university, training of the faculty/students on a digital platform, and proper scheduling of classes. The general rule mentions the use of the Google Suite applications as the official online educational platform of the university. Meeting online and posting recorded discussions are included in online sessions. Posting of classwork and giving guidelines based on the modules are being discussed in modules and classwork. The guidelines also have the proper way of recording students' attendance giving assessments and feedback on the performance of the students in their chosen mode of learning.

The following discussion shows the level of implementation of the flexible learning guidelines as perceived by the students, faculty, and parents.

TABLE 1
LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FLEXIBLE LEARNING GUIDELINES AS PERCEIVED BY THE STUDENTS

Parts of the Guidelines	SL	AOL	RPL	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
A. The Role of the Administrators	3.33	3.15	3.02	**3.17**	Most of the time
B. General Rule	3.64	3.43	3.09	**3.39**	All the time
C. Online Session	3.18	3.18	3.04	**3.13**	Most of the time
D. Modules and Classwork	3.27	3.26	3.07	**3.20**	All the time
E. Attendance	2.93	3.23	2.96	**3.04**	Most of the time
F. Assessment	3.50	3.45	3.06	**3.34**	All the time
G. Feedback	3.09	2.98	2.68	**2.92**	Most of the time
H. Agreements for Modes of Learning	3.53	3.44	3.1	**3.36**	All the time
Grand Mean	**3.31**	**3.27**	**3.00**	**3.19**	**Most of the time**

Table 1 shows the level of implementation of flexible learning as perceived by the students. The general mean of 3.19 which is interpreted as 'Most of the time' was rated by the students. Among all the items, the 'General Rule' is rated the highest (3.39, All the time). General rule tackles the use of Google Applications as the official online educational platform of the University and other online educational apps for the RPL students. In this situation in a distance-learning course, students need much more support and feedback than in a traditional course (Halawa et al., 2017). In this case, giving feedback to the students, though still in the

range of being done most of the time but rated as the lowest in all modes of learning (2.92) which was also the critical point in the findings of Gachago et..al (2018) in South Africa; in the European level based on the study of Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo (2020); and in Pakistan as concluded by Mukhtar et. al. (2020). The procedure on how modules and classwork are provided to the students is also evaluated being implemented all the time. Lapitan et al., (2021) also mentioned in their study that the majority of students appreciated their instructors for providing course materials that were adequate for them to fully comprehend the subjects.

TABLE 2
LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FLEXIBLE LEARNING GUIDELINES AS PERCEIVED BY THE FACULTY

Parts of the Guidelines	SL	AOL	RPL	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
A. The Role of the Administrators	3.5	3.5	3.5	**3.50**	Completely Implemented
B. General Rule	3.18	3.26	3.11	**3.18**	Mostly Implemented
C. Online Session	3.31	3.26	2.93	**3.17**	Mostly Implemented
D. Modules and Classwork	3.59	3.58	3.09	**3.42**	Completely Implemented
E. Attendance	2.68	3.01	2.7	**2.80**	Mostly Implemented
F. Assessment	3.4	3.37	2.94	**3.24**	Completely Implemented
G. Agreements for Modes of Learning	3.39	3.37	3.01	**3.26**	Completely Implemented
Grand Mean	**3.31**	**3.27**	**3**	**3.22**	Mostly Implemented

Table 2 describes the level of implementation of the faculty members on the flexible learning guidelines. A grand mean of 3.22 indicates that faculty members are mostly implementing the guidelines. The role of the administrator in guiding the community on the new normal set-up is completely implemented based on the faculty (3.50). Proper giving of activities through modules and classwork having completely implemented by the faculty (3.42). Attendance is a concern for both the teachers and students. Being compassionate is one of the values that emerged to the faculty members during the pandemic because they believed that understanding the situation of the students could be a big help for the students to get through with their situation as part of the result of the written interview of the faculty.

TABLE 3
LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FLEXIBLE LEARNING GUIDELINES AS PERCEIVED BY THE PARENTS

Variable	4	3	2	1	Mean	Interpretation
1. My child chose one mode of learning	1376	553	108	12	**3.61**	Completely implemented
2. I am aware of the features of the mode of learning chosen by my child.	789	763	345	152	**3.07**	Mostly implemented
3. I signed to the mode of learning agreement chosen by my child.	1258	649	111	31	**3.90**	Completely implemented
4. I am a partner of the University in the educational endeavor of my child as student of Bulacan State University.	901	727	307	114	**3.18**	Mostly implemented
Grand Mean					**3.44**	Mostly implemented

Table 3 shows the role of parents in the implementation of flexible learning having a grand mean of 3.44. Among the four items, the signing of the learning agreement chosen got the highest mean (3.90,

completely implemented). Being aware of the features of the mode of learning chosen by the child got the lowest mean (3.07, mostly implemented). Involving parents in the process is a possible and potentially successful way to keep the studies going forward (Bhamani et al., 2020).

Lived Experiences by the Students, Teachers, and Parents on the Implementation of Flexible Learning

The students from the SL and AOL experienced that having an inconsistent internet connection is the main cause of interruptions during online sessions which found a connection with Febrianto et al., (2020) where one of the reasons why students don't like e-learning is that they can't afford internet connectivity. Students were also having financial difficulties at home during the lockdown period. Students felt powerless to continue online classes when the maximum data limit was reached (Mishra 2020). But, they also realized that there is faster communication between teachers and students in their set-up. Garbe et al. (2020) have conflicting findings from the experiences of the participants in their research wherein the respondents simply mentioned the struggle of vague expectations, suggesting the need for teacher contact stemming from a need for guidance on using online tools and clarity on procedures for finding out what they are supposed to do, how to use the numerous websites, and how to report to the teacher. On the other hand, the RPL students felt that they are left behind because of the late distribution of modules but they admit that their chosen mode of learning teaches them to manage their time properly which was the most important and positive predictor of academic performance, according to the findings of Neroni et al., (2019), time and effort management.

TABLE 4
SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IN TAKING CLASSES WITH CHOSEN
LEARNING MODALITY

SL	AOL	RPL
Students said that this setup of education is more tiring and draining. There is a poor perception of learning due to slow internet connection and many distractions from both the teacher's workplace and the student's home. But some of them find it more fun because it is challenging for them to catch up with the discussion. Also, some of them commended the faster interaction between the students and teachers during discussions.	Some students said that it is hard and not effective. It is because of the different interruptions caused by weak internet connection and technical problems. On the other hand, this setup teaches them to be independent and flexible with the given tasks and time. They are also able to communicate faster with their teachers and classmates. And, their chosen modality saves up data and time.	Since this is a self-learning modality, students said that it is more complicated than face-to-face classes. They learn less. And as a matter of fact, there is a delay in the distribution of modules which is why they are being late with the lesson, and somehow, they are being left behind. But, they have noticed that the time they have is very flexible wherein they can manage it properly.

TABLE 5
**LEARNINGS YOU HAVE GAINED FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING**

SL	AOL	RPL
Students have learned how to adjust and be flexible with the big changes in education that this new normal requires. They also learn how to be independent in terms of learning some ICT skills on their own. With these, their time management is also being developed as well as their focus on the discussions.	Students' skill in time management is developed. They also learned to work at their own pace and time, independently. And, as they adjust to this new normal education, they were able to maximize the use of technologies and the internet which helped them learn technical skills.	The students gained a lot of learnings from their experiences in the implementation of flexible learning such as being independent as they do self-learning. This also developed their skill in time management and some of them were able to find a part-time jobs. But, some of them are honest that they can't learn anything from this kind of setup.

Developing the student's skills in time management is common among the students of three modalities. The SL and AOL students emphasize the development of their learning in ICT skills because the information and applications on the internet help them a lot to adjust to the new learning set-up which found a connection in the study of Tarrayo et al. (2021). Students have a special relationship with ICT because they are attached to mobile devices and look forward to technology-integrated learning, which reflects their openness to ICT (Alipour et al., 2020). Nonetheless, a different thing came out in the study of Aguilera-Hermida (2020), where the results revealed that after the transition, motivation, self-efficacy, and cognitive engagement all decreased, while only the use of technology increased. The RPL students admit that they are having difficulty learning in their setup. Due to a lack of communication with the distance learning instructor, some students have not participated in the lessons (Abuhammad, 2020).

TABLE 6
**EFFECTIVENESS OF CLASSES DELIVERED FACE-TO-FACE COMPARED TO
CHOSEN MODALITY**

SL	AOL	RPL
In the respondents' opinion, classes delivered on the modality they have chosen are NOT as effective and rigorous as face-to-face classes. They believe that face-to-face classes are still the most effective learning modality, especially with the subjects that require physical attendance such as TLE and PE. But, because students see the efforts of their professors, some of them said that this learning modality is already effective.	The majority of the respondents answered no. They believe that face-to-face class is much better than their modality. They have mentioned that their teachers give many activities. But some of them said that their chosen modality is good enough for them to learn from their teachers, who exert effort to also adapt to this new normal education.	RPL students still insist that face-to-face setup is much more effective.

A unanimous answer from the three modalities emerges in this question. They said that face-to-face classes are still the most effective learning modality. Despite the desire of the students to have face-to-face classes, they are aware that going to school will not be possible in the meantime, and they realized that the learning modality that they have chosen because of the efforts of the teachers to make the learning process effective make them adapt to the new normal set-up. Because of the school closures, students' acceptance and use of e-learning are far more complex and inevitable than they would be under normal circumstances (Sukendro et al., 2020). Teachers and students worked together to incorporate online teaching-learning, and they all agreed that in this pandemic, there is no alternative to online education (Mishra et al., 2020). One proof of these came out with the findings of the study of Lapitan et al., (2021) on their interview with the students, because the students appreciate their teachers' efforts in their online class, words like "professors" and "instructors" also appeared in the word cloud.

TABLE 7
**CHANGES WOULD BE NEEDED TO MAKE YOUR CHOSEN MODE OF
LEARNING EFFECTIVE**

SL	AOL	RPL
The students are asking the professors to be more considerate in terms of how many and how frequently they give activities because not all students can afford these online classes. They also suggest having more engaging and motivating classes because their attention is being divided due to different distractions at home. But some of them said that what they have now is the best and most effective way possible.	The respondents ask teachers to give fewer activities and give consideration to every student, especially the students who do not have enough resources to study. They were also thinking of free Wi-Fi for each of them so they can attend all their online classes. Some also suggested that teachers should upload pre-recorded videos that they can use every time they have questions regarding the discussion. And some of them want the face-to-face setup back.	The respondents ask for on-time distribution of modules because they do not want to be late with the lesson. They also noticed that the content of the modules is hard to understand in their situation where there is no online discussion. In line with this, some of them want to shift to other modalities because they are no longer learning, but only submitting requirements. They said that we need to understand each other in this kind of situation since the face-to-face class is not yet possible.

The changes that the SL and AOL students suggest is for the teachers to be considerate of the number of activities to be given in their mode of learning. According to them, not all students have enough resources to be always online and do the activities. As in the study of Hussein et al., (2020), a great volume of coursework required for the students to complete was cited as a negative aspect of their online experience. For the RPL students, they are requesting to make the distribution of modules be on time for them to learn together with the other students in the other modes. They are also requesting to make the content of the module easier to understand, especially in their set-up where they don't always have the opportunity to meet their teachers. RPL students felt that they are only submitting the module without learning at all. Seemingly, distance learning was hampered by a lack of instructors to assist students (Abuhammad, 2020).

TABLE 8
ADVANTAGES OF IMPLEMENTING A FLEXIBLE LEARNING PROGRAM AT
THIS INSTITUTION

SL	AOL	RPL
Studying from home is the top advantage they have seen. It is no longer a hassle for them to go to school, experience heavy traffic, and not be exposed to the virus. They also find it good that despite the pandemic, formal education is being pushed through. In line with this, the students are being more independent and flexible in terms of learning. They also have the freedom to choose what modality is best for them.	Flexible learning makes education continue. No matter how hard and risky it is, the institution still pushed this school year to continue. In line with this, the students are safe studying at their home where they can do some other tasks they want to, which develops their time management. They have also learned how to use technologies for educational purposes.	One of the advantages mentioned by the students is the flexibility of the time. They find it good that they are the ones who control and handle their time. Second, they learned how to be independent because no professors helped them to understand the lesson. Third, their health will not be compromised as they study from their home. And lastly, they have the freedom to choose the modality of learning.

Though students experience a hard time in their chosen mode of learning, still there are advantages that they pointed out which found a connection in the findings of Cahapay (2020) in his study about the 'lived experiences of college students who belong to the marginalized group of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. The respondents said that they found the present educational set-up as a driver of aspiration beyond crisis and had taught them that education has unintended positive outcomes. The SL and RPL students highlighted that the freedom of choosing what modality is the best for them is advantageous. Online learning was found to be beneficial because it provided learners with flexibility and convenience (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). Using technology for educational purposes is the positive effect of the new set up according to AOL students just like in the study of Coman et al. (2020). The safety of staying at home while studying is the common advantage that the students from the three modes of learning believed. Seemingly, in the study, flexible learning became a comprehensive approach that enables the university to be 'more responsive and relevant' (Andrade and Alden-Rivers, 2019).

The disadvantages of flexible learning programs were recorded. SL and AOL students highlighted the unstable internet connection they have and the proper gadgets to use to do their activities which were also discussed by Rotas and Cahapay (2020) as well as Santos (2020). They are also encountering technical problems in connecting online and attending classes. Because of technical limitations, delayed feedback, and the instructor's inability to effectively manage Information and Communication Technologies, most students indicated that online classes could be more difficult than traditional classrooms (Muthuprasad et al., 2021, Markova et al., 2017, Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Santos et al., 2020). As students come from various socioeconomic backgrounds and have the same pedagogical approach, there is a pressing need to bridge the divide between the haves and have-nots, remote rural and urban affluent (Mishra et al., 2020). These reasons are enough for them to say that since teachers cannot monitor all students and interruptions during discussions commonly occur, the quality of learning is not as good as face-to-face. According to Hussein et al., (2020), insufficient support from teachers and colleagues causes some students to feel lost. Since online teaching-learning is still in its infancy in this country, a lack of understanding of students' differences can lead to biased conclusions.

TABLE 9
DISADVANTAGES OF IMPLEMENTING A FLEXIBLE LEARNING PROGRAM AT THIS INSTITUTION

SL	AOL	RPL
Since this modality requires an internet connection, not all students can afford to install a stable connection and can't even afford to buy gadgets to support their education. This flexible learning program could also weaken the students' physical and mental health because they are being exposed to radiation. And since the teacher cannot fully monitor all the students, the quality of learning is not as good as in face-to-face classes.	Harder: this is the word that summarizes the disadvantages of flexible learning programs for them. It is harder to study because most of them do not have enough resources to use for their online classes. It is harder because of the weak internet connection. And it is harder because, during online classes, different technical problems occur. All these things cause interruptions to the discussion that make it harder for the students to perceive quality learning.	The respondents have observed the institution's lack of preparation regarding the implementation of RPL. The lessons were unclearly discussed by the modules. And the modules are being distributed late. It seems that the respondents get more activities and stress, but less attention from the professors.

The RPL has a lot to say in terms of the disadvantages of the flexible learning program especially the mode of learning they chose. They mention the lack of the University in the preparation of the implementation of RPL, lessons in the module are unclearly discussed, and late distributions of modules. They added, they get more activities and stress but less attention from the professors. In this case, there is a potential threat that these students feel isolated and may not engage properly (Halawa, 2017).

DISCUSSION

Essentially, these findings were strengthened by the findings of Rotas and Cahapay (2020) when they tried to know the voices of Philippine university students in the wake of the covid-19 crisis.

Teachers
What Learning Have You Gained From Your Experiences in the Delivery of FLM?
Learning how to use different online platforms like Google Classroom, Google Meet, and so on, is one of the best things that the teachers have gained from their experiences in the delivery of FLM. They were able to explore their computer more than they do during face-to-face classes wherein the use of Microsoft Office is the only thing they know. The same finding was reported by Ho et al., (2020) and Aguilera-Hermida (2020) that the pandemic of COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to fully integrate e-learning into Vietnamese higher education. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Higher Education sector became a large "e-learning laboratory." Regardless of how they feel about e-learning, university lecturers and students have a good experience with it. As a result, HEIs must maximize their e-learning investment (Sukendro et al., 2020).

Also, they were able to show compassion to their students, most especially those who cannot afford this kind of setup of education. They believe that being considerate to their students and understanding their situation are the keys to making this FLM beneficial to both teachers and students. Educators must be aware of these conditions and urge students to have a positive attitude, be motivated, and rely on their prior knowledge (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020).

Lastly, the teachers also learned to maximize their time during online sessions and to be flexible in adapting to changes whenever some interruptions happen. During the lockdown, there was a greater

understanding of the time-bound importance and criticalities of the online teaching-learning mode (Mishra et al., 2020).

What Support Have You Received Before and During the Implementation of Flexible Learning?

Before the implementation of flexible learning, teachers attended different webinars and training on how to conduct online classes. Teachers agreed that orientation programs and seminars were beneficial in learning how to use the latest online teaching-learning modes (Mishra et al., 2020). Further, according to Mishra, excellent domain knowledge, proficient computer knowledge, communication skills, clarity of expression, emotionally connect with the students, and other required skills to deal with the demands of the online platforms, as well as the ability to resolve minor problems during and after the online classes, are found to be online teaching skills and techniques needed to teach in this pandemic. And during the implementation, the university also provided internet allowance for the teachers. Nevertheless, Scherer et al., (2021) mentioned that good institutional support may not be enough to compensate for a lack of confidence in online teaching. During the pandemic, faculty, administrators, and students faced a variety of challenges that may have impacted teaching and learning (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020).

What Training Would You Like to Take Part in to Enhance Your Knowledge and Skills in the Delivery of Flexible Learning?

Teachers agreed that orientation programs and workshops were beneficial in learning how to use the newest modes of usable online teaching-learning. For most of the teachers, the webinars and training they have attended are already enough. But for some, they would like to take part in training/webinars about video editing, G Suite, how to lessen cheating on quizzes/exams online, and other online educational apps aside from Google apps, to enhance their knowledge and skills in the delivery of flexible learning. Teachers raised the issue of conducting online practical classes during the lockdown period, stating that it was difficult because it required systematic demonstration of the entire process in front of the students. Using a new educational approach was a challenging task for the teachers (Mishra et al., 2020, Saidi et al., 2021).

Recommendations to Make Flexible Learning Successful

The teachers have recommendations to make the delivery of flexible learning successful. First is the provision of laptops and data loads for students so that they will have no excuse to not attend online classes as in the study of Abuhammad (2020), where the school provider's inability to keep up with new technology prevented students from benefiting from distance learning effectively or hampered them from benefiting from distance learning. It's worth noting that Qatar's Higher Supreme Education Council has pledged to provide less fortunate students with a computer and fully paid Internet access, something that may be difficult to achieve in other developing countries with larger populations and poor economic conditions like the Philippines (Al-Jaber & Al-Ghamdi, 2020).

Second, there should be training for both teachers and students that could help with this setup of education. Additionally, they also recommended creating a G Suite account for all the students for better security of the online classes. In line with this, it would be better if the number of students per section will be lessened. To direct the learners to digitized education the faculty-to-learner ratio in the country is insufficient (Dubey & Pandey, 2019). The CHED reported last 2018, that the average faculty-student ratio is 1:23 (OPRKM-Knowledge Management Division, 2018) wherein the University reported that the faculty-student ratio is 1:28 which is not being observed at this time of the pandemic.

And lastly, the teachers requested to have fewer forms be submitted for it affects their preparation for online teaching and its quality. Hence, Markova et al., (2017) mentioned that faculty play an important role in knowledge building and can assist all stakeholders in the tertiary sector in finding ways to maximize the ICT potential of distance tertiary education.

Parents

Experiences of Parents in the Implementation of "Flexible Learning" of Their Child/Children

Some of the parents answered the question by "maayos naman" (okay/alright) which seems that they find this flexible learning to be a good alternative learning modality. It is because they can monitor their children and see how focused and determined they are when it comes to their assignments and other activities. In the study of Garbe et al. (2020), some parents experienced the other way around that during the COVID school closures, parents have reported trouble performing job-related tasks and assisting their child(ren) in completing schoolwork like having to choose between work and helping/spending time with their children, for example. But most of them said that this setup is much more difficult because of different factors, like some interruptions at home, delayed lessons, etc., caused by poor internet connections. The same experiences in homeschooling were mentioned in the study of Hussein et al., (2020) that there are some homes where there is no learning space provided for their children because disruptions are coming from the family members. While others' lack of home technology was linked to the limited use of distance learning and the benefits derived from it (Abuhammad, 2020).

Effectiveness of the Chosen Flexible Learning Mode Compared to Face-to-Face Classes Before

Parents said that this flexible learning is much more stressful and difficult for their children because they notice different interruptions and disturbances during their online classes which are primarily caused by poor internet connection. Garbe et al., (2020) in their study highlighted how parents consider internet connectivity as one of the major barriers to remote learning. However, since the world is experiencing a pandemic, flexible learning is good enough to continue their children's education while securing their safety.

Strengths of Offering Flexible Learning at Bulacan State University

There are three major advantages of flexible learning mentioned by the parents. Although they are left with no choice because face-to-face classes are still impossible, their child will not be left behind and can continue his/her education amidst the pandemic. In line with this, the parents are confident with their child's safety because they are in their own homes. And they can monitor their child's academic performance. In a similar study conducted by Garbe et al., (2020) parents overwhelmingly agreed with the school closure policy and were pleased with the amount of service offered by school districts, but they did mention some places where they struggled.

Weakness in the Implementation of Flexible Learning at Bulacan State University

Poor internet connection is a problem that has caused delays and interruptions in implementing remote learning in general. A similar result is noted in the study of Garbe et al. (2020) mentioning that since the internet isn't great, it's difficult for them to complete tasks, and there's a need for everybody in the family to use it, despite the restricted bandwidth. There was never a day when their child has not voiced complaints about it. And that is a major disadvantage of this flexible learning that compromises the quality of learning. The parents have mentioned that there are times that their child cannot understand the lesson because of internet connection issues. Virtual learning tools can improve and maintain the education system's resilience in the face of the pandemic. However, the educational system's quality and performance, as well as progress toward sustainable development, can be adversely impacted (Al-Jaber & Al-Ghamdi, 2020).

Improvements Needed in the Techniques in the Delivery of Instruction to Make Flexible Learning Effective

Even though the face-to-face class is still impossible, some parents are suggesting it be observed. On the other hand, many parents have observed that some teachers are being inconsiderate. Some teachers are forcing their children to attend online classes, do online reporting, and pass many activities, even if they are not in a Synchronous Learning modality. That is why parents are requesting teachers to be more considerate because not all students afford to buy good gadgets and stable internet connections. According to the study by Bhamani et al. (2020), parents are aware that teachers are also having a hard time with the

sudden shift to online learning, and it is very evident that as a result, children's learning is jeopardized, and their parents are understandably worried.

From the results of the study, the following framework was crafted.

FIGURE 1
A UNIVERSITY FLEXIBLE LEARNING MODEL: FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION
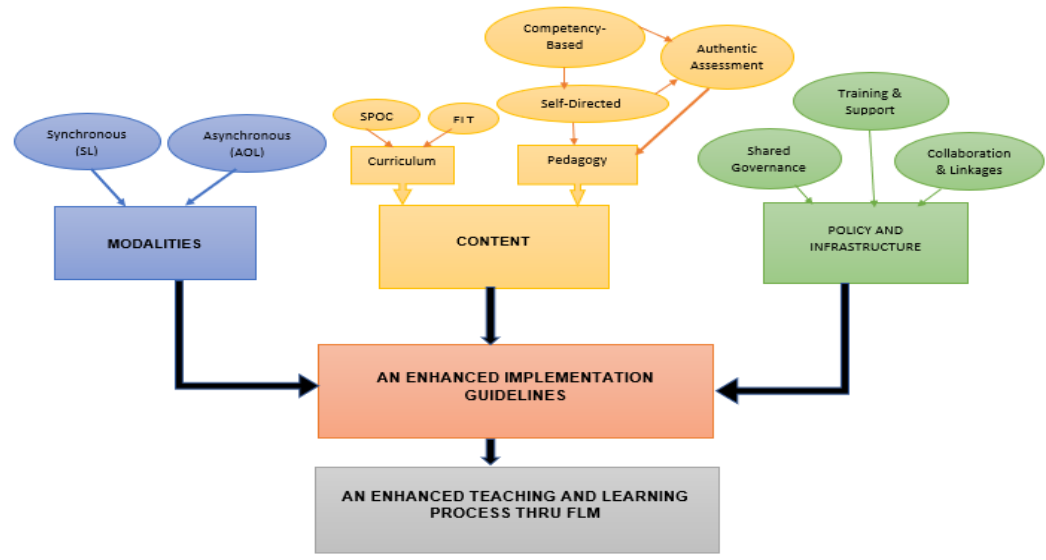
In the framework, two modalities remain since RPL was agreed to be removed in the next phase of FLM implementation. The content of the curriculum is to be revisited and restructured with the inclusion of SPOC and choosing the ELT (Essential Learning Tasks), which will be implemented as a Self-Directed and through Competency-Based Approach. To maintain academic quality, assessments must be through authentic assessment or the application of real-world contexts and problem-solving. The problem on the delivery shall be covered with policies to be crafted that will guide the collaboration and building of linkages with LGUs and other stakeholders, shared governance with employees and faculty, and the suggested support and training needed for the students and faculty. All of these to an Enhanced Implementation Guidelines that will lead to an Enhanced Teaching and Learning Process thru FLM.

CONCLUSIONS

The experiences of administrators of the University, especially those who are tasked to formulate guidelines on how learning can still be continuously offered in the University considering the differences in its clientele, were challenging. Everyone is new in the set-up, and no one in the University is trained to face the challenges. The formulated and approved FLM guidelines are a breakthrough for the University because it sets the direction for the unknown situation. The first semester of the curriculum year 2020-2021 is about to end, and this is the right time to evaluate the level of effectiveness and efficiency of the guidelines. The result shows that the guidelines were mostly implemented considering the differences of the respondents in various aspects. Though there are hindrances in the full implementation of the guidelines because of the inconsistent internet connection and problems in acquiring advanced technology for learning, it is notable the comments of the parents that they are thankful to the University because of finding ways on how their children continue education amidst the pandemic. The students highlighted that the strength of the guidelines is giving them options (SL/AOL/RPL) on how they will study in this new normal. But, the RPL students emphasized that guidelines on handling the modules for them are not properly

implemented. Among all groups of students, the RPL experienced the worst. This study is a preparation for a better new educational landscape for the University. A new set of guidelines was crafted, and existing guidelines were enhanced.

Since collecting data was done online, the maximum participation of the students, faculty, and parents was not fully accomplished. It is recommended that guidelines must be thoroughly implemented especially the training requested by the faculty and continuous dissemination of information about the modality of learning to the parents of the students.

The study was done within the BulSU context only and could not generalize the situations and experiences of others regarding the implementation of FLM, thus it is further suggested for future researchers to conduct the same in other contexts.

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