

Original Research Article

READINESS OF APAYAO STATE COLLEGE-CONNER CAMPUS TO FLEXIBLE LEARNING MODALITIES

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the level of readiness of students with flexible learning modalities and to identify the difficulties encountered in the implementation of flexible learning among the students enrolled in Bachelor of Secondary Education of Apayao State College. A questionnaire was used to gather data and a Focus Group Discussion was conducted to validate the reliability of the data. Results of the study showed that 90.41% of the respondents were aware of the new learning modalities wherein 75.38% prefer the Offline Learning or the use of Worktexts; 97.33% used Smartphones in their e-Learning. Problems encountered includes poor and/or fluctuating signals; lack of trainings for the new learning modalities; insufficient technological and financial resources; and family and work responsibilities. Furthermore, the respondents were Quite Ready to Much Ready for the implementation of the flexible learning modalities although 69.92% said that e-learning does not provide sustainable, adequate, satisfactory and quality education.

Keywords: *Readiness, flexible learning modalities, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Section 15, Article 2, of the 1987 Constitution, which states that the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them, and in adherence to Section 3 of Presidential Proclamation No 929 s. 2020, which states that all government agencies to render full assistance and cooperation with each other to mobilize the necessary resources to undertake, critical, necessary and appropriate disaster response aid and measures to curtail, and eliminate the threat of COVID-19, this office conducts this rapid survey to contribute to monitoring and mitigating the impact of the pandemic in our educational programming.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is encouraging HEIs to adopt the flexible learning method for the upcoming academic year, given that not all of the students have the required resources for online learning. Flexible Learning is the design and delivery of programs, courses, and learning interventions that address learners' unique needs in terms of place, pace, process, and products of learning. It involves the use of digital and non-digital technology, and covers both face-to-face/in-person learning and out-of-classroom learning modes of delivery or a combination of modes of delivery. It ensures the continuity of inclusive and accessible education when the use of traditional modes of teaching is not feasible, as in the occurrence of national emergencies. Flexible Learning is a pedagogical approach allowing flexibility of time, place and audience including, but not solely focused on, the use of technology. Although it commonly uses the delivery methods of distance education and facilities of education technology, this may vary depending on the levels of technology, availability of devices, internet connectivity, level of digital literacy and approaches (SEAMEO, CHED 2020)

Moreover, CHED is calling for a rolling opening of classes. If an HEI can offer a full-online mode of delivery of lessons, it can open classes earlier than August; while HEIs adopting the flexible learning method may start classes not earlier than the last week of

August, and for residential modalities: classes can start on September based on the CHED COVID Advisory No. 7. Dated 24 May 2020.

Complying with the CHED issuances, Apayao State College will utilize flexible, blended learning modalities to include a combination of online and offline modalities, not just purely online, but including the use of digital and non-digital technology. The College will employ a combination of modes of delivery using the facilities of education technology and radio.

As such, the College will pursue a capability building program for the upgrading of faculty capabilities on the use of various alternative deliveries both non-ICT and ICT platforms in education. The focus of the trainings aims at helping faculty increase their knowledge, hone their skills and deepen their understanding on flexible learning options and become prepared to deal with the new normal by SY 2020-2021 amidst this pandemic. ASC will run a Summer Training Workshop Series on Flexible Learning Strategies with the theme *"ASC Adapting to Varied Learning Modalities during the New Normal/ COVID-19 Pandemic"*.

Appropriate alternative learning platforms utilized by ASC which consist of electronic and non-electronic learning methods, self-directed learning activities, simulations, case-based scenarios, among others, for the required contact hours, to achieve the course outcomes/program outcomes including evaluation and assessment based on the result of the curriculum review and assessment of its instructional capabilities.

The five (5) teaching modalities will include the following:

1. On-line (e-Learning)

ICT enabled learning modalities like cloud-subscribed, asynchronous-based teaching-learning for students with internet connectivity in which the teacher provides materials, tests, activities that can be accessed by the students at any time using the Self-Directed Learning Support Management System (SeDi LMS) extended by the Isabela State University (ISU) was implemented this coming academic year. Furthermore, the use of Messenger was also utilized to communicate with the students.

2. Offline (Modular)

Printed modules, work texts and course guides were provided for students without IT gadgets, no internet connectivity, and no cellphone network signal in the locality. Learning materials was saved in USB Portable Flash Drives for students who opted to use their IT gadgets but have poor or limited internet connectivity.

These materials and guides with schedules arranged by week per topic with matching due date of submissions, was distributed to the students with limited or no internet connectivity. Communicating with students through the use of mobile phones was another recourse to follow-up other concerns related to the learning materials given to them.

3. Radio broadcasting network

School –on-the – Air through the Kasaranay Community Radio was launched covering the teaching of General Education Curriculum (GEC) subjects. The creation of General Education Curriculum (GEC) Department paved the way to address the projected increase of freshmen.

The five (5) subjects was aired in the School-On-the-Air (SOA) Program through the Radyo Kasaranay following the current free slots in the radyo schedules. The airing of the SOA was every MWTThF 1-2: 00 PM & Sat 9-12; 1-3 PM (total of 9 hours per week).

Chart 1: Timeline

Schedule	Subjects
Monday 1:00-2:00 PM	Readings in Philippine History
Wednesday 1:00-2:00 PM	Purposive communication
Thursday 1:00-2:00 PM	The Contemporary World
Friday 1:00-2:00 PM	Kontekstwalisadong Komunikasyon sa Filipino (KOMFIL)
Saturday 9-10 AM	Art Appreciation
Saturday 10:01-11 AM	Readings in Philippine History
Saturday 11:01AM- 12 noon	Purposive communication
Saturday 1:00-2:00 PM	The Contemporary World
Saturday 2:01-3:00 PM	Kontekstwalisadong Komunikasyon sa Filipino (KOMFIL)

A Training on Broadcasting was conducted on July 20 – 22, 2020 among the faculty who participated in the SOA and taught the identified subjects, with Radyo Kasaranay Team: Prof. Sonia Belarde, Mrs. Zoe Thea Benito, Mr. Nelson Tumaliuan, Dr. Reymarie Caban as Resource Speakers in coordination with For. David Rodolfo, the Director of Extension of the College.

Chart 2: The coverage of the Radio Kasaranay include the following areas:

Areas	Municipalities
Cagayan	- Pamplona, Ballesteros, Lallo, Abulug, Allacapan
Apayao	- Luna (up to Lappa)
	- Sta. Marcela
	- Pudtol (up to Aurora)
	- Flora (up to Poblacion)

4. On –Site Teaching- Learning

Another alternative delivery system is the on-site teaching. Faculty members conducted community-based teaching for ASC Students at areas where the students cannot be reached by on-line modes and no communication signals. Lectures for classes with computation exercises/ skills and hands-on activities was conducted in Barangay halls per cluster of students on pre- identified schedules.

5. Establishment of Barangay E-Learning (BEL) Hubs in Selected Municipalities

The College established kiosks with computer desktop equipped with internet connection for selected barangays of Apayao. Memorandum od Agreements (MOAs) were forged with LGUs for this Community–Based e learning Hubs/ Kiosk in selected Barangays known as Bararangay E-Learning (BEL) Hubs.

The study aimed to assess the readiness of ASC Faculty and students to adapt to flexible learning options. Apayao State College (ASC) like other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country maintains that the students and their families must have access to education despite the pandemic. Flexible learning options will provide an alternative, tailored education and support the learners and young people who might be disengaged from mainstream school because of the contagion. Faculty and students are the

respondents of the survey since they are the immediate persons whose responses are essential in selecting the kind of support programs necessary for the continuance of the learners' education.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the profile of the students according to:
 - a) Age
 - b) Civil Status
 - c) Address/ Location
 - d) Monthly Family Income
2. To assess students' awareness of the implementation of flexible learning modalities;
3. To determine the level of readiness of students on the flexible learning modalities; and
4. To identify the difficulties encountered in the implementation of flexible learning

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

In order to best capture the subtle and multifaceted cultural nuances, the main study approach was qualitative with both focus group interviews and a questionnaire being used.

Questionnaire

While all participants responded to the interview, only those who took the flexible learning option responded to the 19-item questionnaire which either required making a selection on a 4-point scale or making short open-ended statements. The questionnaire sought information on how participants worked with the flexible learning handout/brief—their reflections; its language clarity and clarity of information; if and how they approached the activities and if the brief assisted in giving a better understanding of the project; and if they worked with friends. The questionnaire was not administered to those who took the classroom option, as the questions were not related to their experience.

Focus Group Interview

Focus group interviews held with all groups followed a set of open-ended questions in the same sequence to maintain a similar standard and draw the same information from all. Answers that required further probing were followed up in an unstructured way, making the interview style semi-structured, conversational, and (on occasions) retrospective. To improve the validity and reliability of the data, all interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Focus group interviews probed and followed up responses to the questionnaire. They sought reasons for the rejection or preference for either the flexible learning option or the classroom option; the approach to doing projects and activities; how the visual diary project was approached; problems related to study, including studying in a second language; and general reflections on flexible study.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study include the students of ASC-Conner across all programs of the college. Purposive sampling was employed due mainly to the prevailing situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic where there is restriction of travels and sporadic community lockdowns.

Tabulation and Interpretation of Data

All data gathered were tabulated and interpreted using frequency count and percentages. The assessment of readiness was done using the 4-point Likert Scale below:

Chart 3: 4-point Likert Scale to Interpret Readiness with the Flexible Learning Modalities

Scale	Mean Range	Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
4	3.25 – 4.00	Very Much Ready (VMR)
3	2.50 – 3.24	Much Ready (MR)
2	1.75 – 2.49	Quite Ready (QR)
1	1.00 – 1.74	Not Ready (NR)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent's Demographic Profile

Table 1 shows the Percentage (%) Distribution of Respondents According to Profile. Based from the general assessment with the overall respondents, majority of them are from ages 20-30 which covers 97.18% of the total respondents and 31-40 covers 2.82%. As to the gender, majority of the respondents are male which covers 61.47% of the total respondents and 38.53% were female. The results of the civil status showed that 96.05% were single (not specified if unmarried but with family, live-in with partner) and 3.95% were married under civil law. As to the educational attainment of the parents, highest percentage belongs to the parents who were high school undergraduate with 23.68%. Also, 69.92% of the total respondents have family income lower than 5,000 in a month.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Profile

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-30	517	97.18%
31-40	15	2.82%
TOTAL	532	100
Gender		
Male	205	61.47%
Female	327	38.53%
TOTAL	532	100
Civil Status		
Single	511	96.05%
Married	21	3.95%
TOTAL	532	100
Parent's Highest Educational Attainment		
College Graduate	51	9.59%
College Level	86	16.17%
Highschool Graduate	81	15.23%
Highschool Level	126	23.68%
Elementary Graduate	95	17.86%
Elementary Level	93	17.48%
TOTAL	532	100
Monthly Income of Parents		
less than 5,000	372	69.92%

5,000 to 10,000	108	20.30%
10,000 to 20,000	45	8.46%
20,000 and above	7	1.32%
TOTAL	532	100

Self-Assessment on the Implementation of Flexible Learning

Table 2 shows Percentage (%) Distribution of Respondents based on Self-Assessment. According to the data, 90.41% of the respondents says that they are aware of the new normal learning modalities being implemented by ASC and 9.59% responds that they are not aware. Also, most of the respondents says that they were ready with the new style of learning being implemented by the school that covers 84.02% of the total respondents and they rely most on face book (Fb) as a source of information for the curriculum of learning that covers response of 54.89% since 89.66% of them have smartphones to use for online classes. As to the internet stability in most of the respondent's area, 39.85% can't acquire stable internet signals so they have to acquire signals outside their homes specifically on the mountainous area. Data also shows that their internet load and gadgets were mainly provided by their parents. Also, survey results shows that most of respondents would find learnings easily through watching and listening to the discussions by the teacher.

Table 2. Percentage (%) Distribution of Respondents based on Self-Assessment

Questions	Frequency	Percentage
Are you aware of the new normal learning modalities implemented by ASC?		
Yes	481	90.41%
No	51	9.59%
Are you ready for the new normal learning modalities implemented by ASC?		
Yes	447	84.02%
No	85	15.98%
Where did you get the information on the learning modalities implemented by ASC?		
FB	292	54.89%
Messenger	155	29.14%
ASC personnel	85	15.97%
Which of the following learning modalities do you prefer?		
Online	92	17.29%
Offline	401	75.38%
Onsite Teaching/Learning	31	5.38%
Barangay e-learning (BEL) hubs	8	1.5%
Which of the following gadget/s do you personally own?		
Smartphone	477	89.66%
Tablet	10	1.88%
Laptop	40	7.52%
Radio	5	0.94%
How do you rate stability of the internet in your area?		
Very stable signal 24/7	36	6.77%
Slightly fluctuating/unsteady signal	164	30.83%
Poor signal	212	39.85%
Very poor signal	79	14.85%
No internet signal	41	7.71%
What is the type of internet connectivity in your area?		

5G	2	0.38%
4G	229	43.05%
3G	169	31.77%
2G	95	17.86%
LTE	7	1.32%
HSPDA	1	0.19%
EDGE	29	5.45%
From where do you access the internet?		
Home	228	42.86%
From other people's wi-fi that can be accessed from home	26	4.89%
Outside home	268	50.38%
Who finances your internet load?		
Parents	289	54.32%
Own earnings	218	40.98%
Scholarship	24	4.51%
If it becomes a necessity/requirement, what gadget/s can you get for yourself?		
Smartphone	378	71.05%
Tablet	30	5.64%
Laptop	119	22.37%
Desktop	3	0.56%
Radio	23	0.38%
How will you acquire the gadget/s?		
Buy using parents money	305	57.33%
Buy using scholarship's stipend	391	7.33%
Buy using own money	188	35.34%
What powers your ICT and electronic gadgets at home?		
Electricity	518	97.33%
Solar power	11	2.07%
Hydro power	3	0.56%
What style do you find learning most easy?		
Listening	144	27.07%
Watching	21	3.95%
Watching and listening	217	40.79%
Reading	150	28.20%
Which teaching learning modality/process motivates you to learn most?		
Personal interaction	89	16.73%
Listening to discussion by the teacher	302	56.77%
Watching multimedia lessons	2	0.38%
Internet surfing	10	1.88%
Self-reading could help guides such as modules/worktexts	128	24.06%
Are there other people who can help you in understanding your lessons?		
Yes	121	22.74%
No	411	77.26%

Assessment on the Readiness with the Flexible Learning Modalities

It can be gleaned from Table 3 below that the respondents were Much Ready in terms of familiarity of e-learning, including its advantages and disadvantages; management of time in the conduct/participation of on-line classes; utilization of available learning management

system or resources; valuing and practicing social responsibility and legal use of ICT tools and resources; preparation and submission of requirements and outputs; and fostering a positive online learning environment with students and teachers.

On the other hand, the respondents were Quite Ready in terms of knowledge and skills in participating on-line classes; having ICT devices and stable internet for the on-line classes; effective utilization of the ICT devices; and motivation to utilize features of an on-line learning environment.

Table 3. Mean Assessment on the Readiness with the Flexible Learning Modalities

	MEAN	DI
Familiarity of e-learning and its advantages and disadvantages.	2.53	Much Ready
Managing my time in the conduct/participation of/on online classes.	2.51	Much Ready
Using any of the available learning management system or resources effectively.	2.53	Much Ready
Valuing and practicing social responsibility and legal use of ICT tools and resources.	2.46	Much Ready
Preparing/submitting requirements/outputs	2.64	Much Ready
Fostering a positive online learning environment with students/teacher.	2.36	Much Ready
My knowledge and skills were required in conducting/participating in online classes	2.42	Quite Ready
Having computers and stable internet access intended for online classes.	2.10	Quite Ready
Using devices (smartphone, laptop, tablets) for my online classes with effectiveness.	2.40	Quite Ready
Motivating myself to utilize features of an online learning environment	2.39	Quite Ready

Problems Encountered in the Implementation of Flexible Learning

As gleaned in Table 4 below, almost all (97.18%) of the respondents have not attended trainings, workshops or course related to e-learning. Moreover, vast majority (85.34%) only uses smartphones in their e-learning. This only shows that the main limitation for the respondents was the lack of necessary trainings/workshops before the implementation of the different Flexible learning modalities. This is coupled by the lack of needed ICT gadgets/equipment which were very important during the e-learning activities. However, the respondents were responsible enough to compensate the insufficiency of trainings by surfing in the internet to better understand their modules and updating the social media while taking on-line classes with 74.25% and 12.41%, respectively.

On the other hand, the most common factors affecting the respondents' learning were insufficient technology resources (72.03%) which were mainly smartphones; insufficient financial resources (59.80%); family and work responsibilities with 37.59% and 35.49%, respectively. Finally, the respondents did not really think that E-learning could provide sustainable, adequate, satisfactory and quality education with 69.92%.

Table 4. Responses/Feedbacks on problems encountered

	Frequency	Percentage
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Attended trainings/workshops on e-learning		
Yes	14	2.63%
No	578	97.37%
Attended a course in basic education or college or graduate school through online/distance education or e-learning/teaching platforms.		
Yes	15	2.82%
No	577	97.18%
Device/s use in E-Learning/Teaching platforms		
Laptop	62	11.65%
Desktop	6	1.13%
Tablet	10	1.88%
Smartphone	454	85.34%
Management of time while learning/teaching remotely		
Playing with gadget when free	35	6.58%
Surfing the net to better understand the modules	395	74.25%
Updating the social media while taking online classes	66	12.41%
Eating food / binging	21	3.95%
Taking quick sleep / nap	15	2.82%
Factors affecting process of learning and completing the coursework		
Insufficient technology resources	412	72.03%
Family responsibilities	215	37.59%
Insufficient financial resources	342	59.80%
Work responsibilities	203	35.49%
Do you think E-Learning provides sustainability, adequacy, satisfaction and quality of education?		
Yes	162	30.08%
No	372	69.92%

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the respondents were quite ready to much ready for the implementation of the new normal alternative learning modalities although problems on internet connectivity, technological, financial and family/work responsibilities hinder in their learning efficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, in-depth study/analysis on other flexible learning modalities listed herein should be conducted.

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