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Experiences on Flexible Learning Modalities Among Teachers of Professional Education Courses in a State University in the Philippines

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Abstract:-

Objectives and Methods: The study utilized a mixed method using a validated researcher –structured questionnaire which was administered to all teachers handing Professional Education Courses . This research utilized descriptive and phenomenological research designs to describe quantitatively and elicit the authentic responses on the implementation and challenges experienced by the respondents in conducting flexible learning modalities.

Results and Findings. It is confirmed in this study that the teachers handling Professional Education Courses have varied experiences on the implementation of flexible learning modalities. Based on the crafted Flexible Learning Management (FLM) in the university, most of the areas are needing improvement towards a better implementation in time of highly unpredictable scenarios that would tremendously affect the instructional delivery pathways in the future. Blended Learning is the most used modality among the teachers as this becomes more practical to use for them and students. Positive views and Professional Attributes were very significant in the successful implementation of Flexible Teaching –Learning Modalities. Varied challenges were experienced by teachers in the course of implementing flexible learning modalities especially on the lack of institutional digital learning platforms that will be more accessible for them and students to have optimum learning outputs.

Novelty. Viable suggestions to improve the policy contained in the Flexible Learning Management System (FLMS) were centered on Institutionalizing the improvement of IT infrastructure to improve the implementation of flexible learning modalities through Digital Learning Platform.

Keywords: flexible learning modalities, professional education courses.

1. Introduction and Rationale

With the onset of new challenges on instructional delivery pathways, universities and colleges all over the world were prompted to make an immediate and proactive response on how instruction could be delivered to the college students as challenged with the varied and highly unpredictable situations and scenarios that calls for teaching-learning flexibility. As observed, varied global scenarios happened unexpectedly that the different academic institutions worldwide were not totally equipped to embrace the impact of these drastic changes to varied academic undertakings.

The Philippines in particular, where there are 1,963 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of which 242 are State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and 242 are Private Institutions encountered gigantic challenges on how to make the transition of the modality from the usual face-to-face to flexible teaching - learning . Meanwhile, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) drafted the Guidelines on the Implementation of Flexible Learning

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(FL). The guidelines are made to ensure that the academic be prepared to untoward incidents that may happen again.

As per CHED guidelines on the implementation of Flexible Learning, SUCs and Private HEIs are urged to explore innovative learning modalities that will facilitate the exodus from traditional to flexible teaching and learning options through formulating the Learning Continuity Plan (LCP). Accordingly, LCP is a document that reflects the framework and system for the transition and integration of flexible learning approaches anchored on the existing tools and resources of the institution, capability of staff and faculty members, and capacity of students. This plan is to be submitted to CHED thru the respective Regional Offices.

 Cognizantly, the commission recognized that our college students are situated differently in terms of time, pace and place. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are given options to customize the instructional delivery modes responsive to students' need to provide learning activities that would maximize learning outputs. This shall also give students the option to choose the delivery mode most convenient to them.

In understanding on how the implementation of new flexible teaching –learning modality has to be done, the study of Abisado, et al (2020) on Flexible Learning Framework Implementing Asynchronous Course Delivery for Philippine Local Colleges and Universities provides a good input to HEIS on how instructional delivery be done at this time of Pandemic based on a framework. Significantly, it was recognized in the study that not all students have access to the internet hence, different ways can be done to deliver the Learning Enrichment Activity Program/Plan (LEAP).

 In addition, Bordoloi, et al (2021) in their research on Perception Towards Online/Blended Learning At The Time Of Covid-19 Pandemic: An Academic Analytics In The Indian Context is helping us future researchers to understand the present state of online/blended learning in a country like India and compare as to how our respective universities and colleges are implementing flexible learning here in the Philippines.

 To analyze the readiness of an institution, Barrera, et al (2021 recommended that the institution should establish first an official online platforms or learning management system and that the flexible learning scheme would utilize a low usage of mobile data to lessen the students' expenses and offline class or use of modules or learning materials should also be an option for those students who don't have connectivity.

In as much that HEIs are into Flexible Learning modality, a substantial input from the qualitative research study on K-12 Teachers' Remote Teaching Self-Efficacy During The Pandemic by Cardullo, et al (2021) accounted some constraints in conducting classes at this time of Pandemic. The internet connection, lack of interaction and communication and challenges with motivation and student engagement were among the challenges met by students thus implying to teachers the need to explore the new teaching platforms at this time of pandemic.

As cited by Edeh Michael Onyema (2021), online education was hindered by poor infrastructures including, network, power, inaccessibility and unavailability issues and poor digital skills. The study underscores the need for all educational institutions, educators, and learners to adopt technology, and improve their digital skills in line with the emerging global trends and realities in education.

As noted, Philippines lack access to a secure Internet connection at all times. This is all the State Universities and Colleges struggle to design flexible learning methods to mitigate some problems in delivering instruction. Eastern Samar State University is one of the SUCs struggling to respond to the new challenges in the delivery of instruction to all students enrolled.

Accepting the challenges in adopting flexilble teaching-learning modality and guided by the Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) submitted to CHED , Eastern Samar State University (ESSU) – College of Education continued its mission to provide adequate and relevant pre-service education experiences to students. It is in this context that faculty members handling Professional Education Courses are challenged on how to design instruction using the flexible teaching- learning modality for the pre-service education students that would equip them with the necessary content knowledge and pedagogical skills for them to successfully assume the role of teachers during their Experiential Learning Courses (ELCs). This paper is an attempt to account the experiences on how the faculty

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members in Professional Education Courses implemented the Flexible Teaching -Learning Modalities The inputs would serve as the solid basis on improving the policy that were crafted for Flexible Learning Management System (FLMS) of the university by putting-up strategic innovations that would immediately respond proactively during highly unpredictable situations in the future.

2. Objectives of the Study:

1. To describe the experiences of faculty members handing Professional Education Courses on the implementation of Flexible Teaching - Learning Modalities relative to:

    1.1   Flexible Learning Management Structure ;

    1.2 Flexible Learning Continuity Plan;

    1.3 Flexible Learning Modalities Used ; and

    1.4 Flexible Learning Assessment Modality.

2   To determine the most used flexible teaching - learning modality by the faculty members:

    2.1 Home-Based Learning (HBL) ;

    2.2 Online Learning (OL); and

    2.3 Blended Learning (BL)

3   To describe the most used flexible teaching - learning modality of faculty members in handing professional education course/s;

4   To identify the challenges experienced by the faculty members in the Implementation of Flexible Teaching – Learning Modality in relation to:

    4.1 Management Resource Support

    4.2 Execution of the Flexible Learning Continuity Plan

    4.3 Utilization of Learning Modalities

    4.4 Assessment of Students' Outputs in Flexible Learning

5   To set an introductory policy brief through doable recommendations to improve the implementation of Flexible Learning Management System (FLMS) in the university

3. Methodology

The study involved all faculty members handling the Professional Education Subjects in the College of Education. It utilized a mixed method. The quantitative part of this research utilized descriptive design as it aims to accurately and systematically describe the implementation of Flexible Learning through pedagogical flexibility. For qualitative research, this study used phenomenological design as this paper attempted to elicit faculty members' responses on the challenges they experienced in the implementation of flexible learning thereby capturing their authentic and intuitive responses on how they experienced teaching-learning flexibility

This study made use of a Researcher-Structured Questionnaire which was validated by four (4) faculty members and pilot-tested in a university recognized by CHED as Center of Excellence (COE) in Education. The survey questionnaire incorporated four (4) parts. First, it elicited the respondents' basic information. The second part dealt mainly on the description of how flexible teaching –learning modalities were implemented and the items in the research instrument were based on CHED Memo. No. 4, Series of 2020. The third part required responses on the use of flexible teaching- learning in three different modalities and the items in the survey were based from the varied experiences shared by faculty members as per interview and items are taken from online sources. Finally, the fourth part would be an open-ended question to be answered by the faculty members which would capture the

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authentic responses of the respondents on the challenges they have experienced in the Implementation of Flexible Teaching- Learning Modality.

 A 3 Point Likert Scaling was used to determine the implementation of Flexible Learning and the respondents' level of agreement as to the use of Flexible Teaching- Learning Modality.

 The data collected were entered into the data matrix using the statistical procedure : mean , percentages and ranks. For the open-ended questions, responses were compiled, dissembled into smaller themes, reassembled using matrix presenting the questions and the authentic responses of faculty members using Vann Manen Thematic Analysis Finally, interpretation and drawing of conclusions were done.

4.   Results and Discussion

This section shows the result on how Flexible Teaching - Learning Modalities as experienced by faculty handling the Professional Education (Prof Ed).

Most of the faculty members are handling one to two Prof Ed Courses across levels during the time of study and only very few are assigned to teach 3-4 subjects.

 Table 1 presents respondents' view on the implementation of Flexible Learning Management Structure. As noted, a Grand Mean of 2. 2 which denotes that there was partial implementation of the FLM Structure. The highest mean (2.5) which was fully implemented was on U-FLAB initiative on the formulation of policies and how the university designs instructional modalities for Flexible Learning. On the other hand, there was a need to improve on the FLM Structure as to class scheduling and on the university's mechanisms to disseminate , inform and orient learners on the learning system, which may be in a form of course packages, manual, briefer, handbook, modules, learning guides for students and are accessible through off-line and online modes

. Moreover, the data has laid the way to make a roadmap at the policy level regarding the beneficial use of flexible teaching- learning modalities both by the teachers and learners during any future crisis-like situations that may arise in the future, There's a need to look into the items that need to be fully implemented to improve the implementation of Flexible Learning Management Structure.

Table 1. On Flexible Learning Management Structure:

On Flexible Learning Management (FLM) Structure	Mean	Interpretation
1.The FLM structure is managed by the University Flexible Learning Advisory Body (U-FLAB) that is composed of the university executive committee , academic and non-academic technical staff in the development of a shared vision that reflects the importance of service and support units in flexible learning developments	2.4	Fully Implemented
2. The U-FLAB formulates policies and designs instructional modalities for Flexible Learning that may include the development of appropriate IT infrastructure, instigating a review of relevant policy issues on Intellectual Property Rights, Information Technology , OER Plagiarism, teaching and learning, assessment, etc.	2.5	Fully Implemented
3. The FLM in our university uses student-centered approach that is deeply rooted in the Students' Needs	2.4	Fully Implemented
4.The FLM in our university provides the students with the most flexibility on:		
4.1 Course Content	2.3	Partially Implemented
4.2 Class Schedules	2.1	Partially Implemented

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On Flexible Learning Management (FLM) Structure	Mean	Interpretation
4.3 Access to Learning Resources	2.3	Partially Implemented
4.4 Innovative Assessment Tools	2.3	Partially Implemented
4.5 Use of Digital Tools	2.2	Partially Implemented
5.The FLM structure in our university provides mechanisms to disseminate , inform and orient learners on the learning system to be implemented, which may be in a form of course packages, manual, briefer, handbook, modules, learning guides for students and are accessible through off-line and online modes	2.1	Partially Implemented
Grand Mean:	**2.2**	**Partially Implemented**

Legend: 3 Fully Implemented 2 Partially Implemented 1 Not Implemented

As gleaned in Table 2 on the Respondents' Assessment on the Implementation **of** Flexible Learning Continuity Plan ,the highest mean (2.5) that was fully implemented was on the giving of emphasis on health and safety protocols among the students and teachers followed by the clarity of policy on Assessment of Learning (Grading System) (2.4) interpreted as fully implemented. The lowest means of 2.0 were on the clarity of university Admission and Retention Requirement , Management of Learning (Teaching Approaches and Strategies) and on policies for Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), OER plagiarism, attendance, reporting and updating of Instructional Materials (IMs)

Table 2. Respondents' Assessment on the Implementation of Flexible Learning Continuity Plan (FLCP)

On Flexible Learning Continuity Plan (FLCP)	Mean	Interpretation
1. The FLCP has a clear system and procedure for the transition to Flexible Learning in terms of:		
1.1 Admission and Retention Requirement	2.0	Partially Implemented
1.2 Management of Learning (Teaching Approaches and Strategies)	2.0	Partially Implemented
1.3 Assessment of Learning (Grading System)	2.4	Fully Implemented
2. The FLCP is comprehensive that is manned by competent university personnel	2.1	Partially Implemented
3. The FLCP contained curricular modifications reflecting flexible learning strategies on content and use of learning materials and objects, teaching and learning activities and requirements, evaluation/assessment	2.1	Partially Implemented
4. The FLCP provides policies on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), OER plagiarism, attendance, reporting and updating of Instructional Materials (IMs)	2.0	Partially Implemented
5. The FLCP emphasizes health and safety protocols of students and teachers	2.5	Fully Implemented
Grand Mean:	2.1	Partially Implemented

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As Professional Education (ProfEd) Faculty members embraced on Pedagogical Flexibility, they engaged in two (2) forms of teaching: synchronous and asynchronous. As viewed in Table 3, the respondents made use of variety of Synchronous Flexible Teaching- Learning Modalities. The highest in rank was the use of Zoom Meeting as 100% of the faculty members were utilizing this. The use of google meet ranked 2 as there were 90% of them was using this modality.Live webinar, Live Chat and Video-Conferencing ranked 3 as 80% of the faculty members have utilized these flexible teaching-learning pedagogies. Newer flexible pedagogies like Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), Schoology, Moodle, Neo-LMS (Schoolbook) and MS TEAMS were not used by the faculty members in undertaking pedagogical flexibility.

Notably, the faculty members had utilized the asynchronous modality. First in the rank was using "email: with 100% of the respondents made use of this while doing flexible teaching. Second in the rank is the use of google classroom, guided video-based activity and printed modules where 90% of the faculty members teaching professional education courses utilized these meaningfully and productively. Moreover, 80% of them made use of audio-recorded powerpoint presentation in their instructional engagement with students. Only 60% used Edmodo and 50% made use of USB to deliver the instruction. However, some of the asynchronous modalities as used by other universities were not used as this would entail technical skill training before the faculty could use these more sophisticated flexible learning modality.

Table 3. Flexible Teaching-Learning Modalities Used by Faculty Members Handling Professional Education Courses:

On Flexible Learning Modalities Used	Percentage of Users	Rank
For Synchronous		
1. Live Webinar	80%	4
2. Live Chat	80%	4
3. Video-Conferencing	80%	4
4. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)	0%	-
5. Zoom Meeting	100%	1
6. Google Meet	90%	2
7. Schoology	0%	-
8. Moodle	0%	-
9. Neo-LMS (Schoolbook)	0%	-
10. MS TEAMS	0%	-
For Asynchronous:		
1. e-mails	100%	1
2. Audio-recorded ppt presentation	80%	6
3. Google Classroom	90%	3
4. Edmodo	60%	7
5. Podcasting	0%	-
6. Use of USB	50%	8
7. Discussion Board	0%	
8. Guided Video-Based Activity	90%	3
9. Neo-LMS (Schoolbook)	0%	-
10. MS TEAMS	0%	-

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11. Wakelet	0%	-
12. Flipgrid	0%	-
13. Printed Modules	90%	3

Generally, the data in Table 4 indicates the Learning Assessment Modality used by Faculty Members while embracing flexible pedagogy. As revealed, 100% of them made use of google forms, 80% made use of Edmodo. Performance – Based Assessment like Making IMs, Demonstration Teaching and Making Essay and Forum Assessment (80%) portfolio was used by 70% of the faculty members. Other forms of flexible form assessment were undertaken to measure the performance of the students like, Video recording of students' reports (60%), Creation of blogs/vlogs (50%) and other forms of creative assessment were provided by the professional education faculty.

Table 4. FlexibleTeaching - Learning Assessment Modality Used by faculty members

On Flexible Learning Assessment Modality	Percentage of Users	Rank
1. Using Automated/Online Exam using:		
1.1 Google Forms	100%	1
1.2 Edmodo	80%	3
1.3 Wikispace	0%	-
1.4 Quizlet Live	0%	-
1.5 Testmoz	0%	-
1.6 Kahoot	30%	12
1.7 Neo-LMS (Schoolbook)	0%	
2. Performance-based assessment:		
2.1 Portfolio	70%	6.5
2.2 Research papers	40%	10.5
2.3 video recording of student's reports and other tasks	60%	8
2.4 Creation of Wiki Pages	0%	-
2.5 Creation Blogs/Vlogs	0%	-
2.6 Creation of Charts and Graphs	50%	9
2.7 Lesson Planning	40%	10.5
2.8 Making of Instructional Materials	80%	3
2.9 Demonstration Teaching	80%	3
2.10 Use of Essay, Discussion and Forum Assessments	80%	3

As revealed in the data in Table 5, 100% of the faculty members made use of "Blended Learning:" of the three types of Flexible Learning Modality as this is supported by their views as presented in Table 6, that the implementation of Blended Learning optimizes the use of active **learning** strategies and potentially improve student **learning** outcomes , faculty can use systematic feedback mechanisms on students' learning progress and there was an assurance that there was a smooth implementation of Blended Learning having a mean of (2.7) interpreted as fully implemented. It can be noted further, that none of the respondents made use of Home-Based Learning and Pure online learning as these would entail bigger budget and establishment of functional IT infrastructure within the university .

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Table 5. Flexible Teaching- Learning Modality Used in Professional Education Subjects

Type of Flexible Learning Modality Used	Percentage of Faculty Users	Rank
Home-Based Learning (HBL)	0%	-
Online Learning (OL)	0%	-
Blended Learning (BL)	100%	1

Table 6. Respondents' Description on the Use of Flexible Teaching- Learning Modality

On Blended Learning (BL)	Mean	Interpretation
1. The faculty used BL materials that optimize the use of active **learning** strategies and potentially improve student **learning** outcomes.	2.7	Fully Implemented
2. The faculty used BL that is designed with greater flexibility /rotation of learning platforms according to the needs/capacity of students	2.6	Fully Implemented
3.The faculty used monitoring tools to assess students' learning outputs in BL	2.6	Fully Implemented
4. The faculty used systematic feedback mechanisms on students' learning progress in BL	2.7	Fully Implemented
5. The faculty ensured the smooth implementation of BL	2.7	Fully Implemented
GRAND MEAN	**2.66**	Fully Implemented

On the thematic analysis and Qualitative responses on how the Flexible Teaching –Learning Modalities were experienced by Faculty Members handling Professional Education Course/s the following are noted:

There were clear qualitative responses of the challenges experienced by faculty members handling professional education specifically on Management of Resource Support, Execution of the FLCP, utilization of learning modalities and assessment of students' output in flexible learning.

As expressed by the respondents, the challenge was centered on the transition from a traditional face-to-face mode of teaching to a blended learning. Apparently, the university and the college is not prepared for this eventualities.

For the management of resource support, the most challenging part is on the learning resources especially the internet connectivity. The university has not yet established a well-structured IT infrastructure in to adapt the new learning modality

In terms of the execution of the FLCP, the faculty viewed that the provision of full-support from the administration is one of the most challenging aspect in the process of its implementation. Some faculty members are needing to enhance their technical abilities to use different learning platforms and the students have difficulty in accessing internet connection in their respective hometowns/barangays when having online class with their professors in Professional Education classes.

There are challenges met by faculty members in the utilization of learning modalities as there is no official digital platform provided by the university that can be used in the utilization of flexible learning modality. As experienced, there was a very limited time of teaching and learning engagement when using zoom.

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Table 7. Summary of Qualitative Responses on how the Flexible Teaching –Learning Modalities were experienced by Faculty Members handling Professional Education Course/s:

CATEGORIES	THEMES
1. How was your experience in teaching Professional Education course/s at the onset of flexible teaching-learning ?	Difficult Experience
	Challenging Experience
	Sympathetic Experience
	Empathetic Experience
	Fulfilling Experience
2. With those experiences, which do you find very helpful to you as a teacher/facilitator?	Adoptive Character
	Administrative Support
	Flexible Learning Management Structure
3. Which one are difficult to deal with?	Adoption to the new learning platform
	Internet Accessibility
4. Why do you think the conduct of your Professional Education course/s was successful?	Collaboration and Cooperation
	Administrative Support
	Attitude of Students
	Varied Online Learning Experiences
	Teachers' Competence
5. What could be your personal and professional attributes that made your teaching successful?	**Personal Attributes**
	Flexible
	Resourceful
	Innovative
	Open-Minded
	Committed
	Love to Learn
	Sensitive to learners' needs
	Professional Attributes
	Pedagogical Competence
	Technological - Know How
	Communication Skill

Table 8. Summary of Qualitative Responses on the challenges experienced by faculty in the Implementation of Flexible Teaching -Learning Modality

CATEGORIES	THEMES
1. Teachers' Challenges in terms of Management Resource Support	Insufficient Learning Resources
	Lack t well-established IT Infrastructure
	Poor Internet Connectivity
	Outdated Students Electronic gadgets
	Delayed Issuance of Printed Modules

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CATEGORIES	THEMES
2. Teachers' challenges in terms of Execution of Learning Continuity Plan	Lack optimum support from the management
	Lacks administrative monitoring
	Low Technical Abilities
	Poor access to internet connectivity
3. Teachers ' challenges experienced in the utilization of Flexible Learning Modality in the university?	Poor Internet Connectivity
	No official digital platform
	Lack Institutional System for FLM
4. Teachers' challenges in the Implementation of Flexible Learning Modality in terms of Assessment of Students' Outputs?	Validity Issue
	Reliability Issue
	Delayed submission of requirements
	Sporadic retrieval of accomplished course works

The most common challenges met by faculty members on the assessment of students' output in flexible learning are on the issue on reliability and the poor retrieval of exercises.

This qualitative data in this study is similar to what has been revealed in the study of Cardullo (2021) on K-12 teachers' remote teaching self-efficacy during the pandemic .Poor Internet connection in doing online class and the level of teachers' self-efficacy in using technology are among the identified challenges

Table 9. Summary of Qualitative Responses a of Faculty as Basis in setting Policy Brief on how to improve the flexible teaching- learning in the different dimensions

Categories	Themes
Improvement on the provision of learning resources	**Proactive Planning and Regular Monitoring** This should be instituted for adequate support of learning resources to the faculty members Regular and efficient administrative monitoring of faculty needs for learning resources essential in implementing flexible teaching and learning
Improvement of Learning Continuity Plan	**Efficient Management** More collaborative work between the management and faculty members in improving the FLCP
Improvement on Flexible Learning Modalities	**Training and Immersion on New Modalities / Digital Teaching** Immerse the faculty members in varied trainings in the conduct of Flexible Learning and keep them abreast with the necessary skills in adapting new learning digital platform Improve the IT Infrastructure Facilities to address the needs in the implementation of Flexible Learning
Improvement on the assessment of students' outputs	**Development of a Learning Assessment System** This institutional assessment system would ensure reliability of test results that would systematize the mechanism for prompt and on time submission of course requirements including the authentic learning performance outputs

Based on the authentic and intuitive responses elicited and accounted from the experiences on how the faculty members in Professional Education Courses implemented the Flexible Teaching -Learning Modalities , the inputs would serve as the solid basis on improving the policy that were crafted for Flexible Learning Management System

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(FLMS) of the university by putting-up strategic innovations that would immediately respond proactively during highly unpredictable situations in the future.

5. Conclusion

It is confirmed in this study that the faculty members handling Professional Education Courses experienced how to implement flexible teaching-learning modalities. Based on the crafted Flexible Learning Management in the university most of the areas are needing improvement for better implementation if highly unpredictable scenarios may occur that would tremendously affect the instructional delivery pathways in the future. Blended Learning is the most used modality among the faculty members as this becomes more practical to use for both teachers and students. Positive views and Professional Attributes were very significant in the successful implementation of Flexible Teaching –Learning Modalities.

Varied challenges were experienced by faculty in the course of implementing flexible teaching-learning modalities especially on the lack of institutional digital learning platforms that will be more accessible for both teachers and students to have optimum learning outputs.

Viable suggestions to improve the policy contained in the Flexible Learning Management System (FLMS) were centered on Institutionalizing the improvement of IT infrastructure to improve the implementation of flexible teaching –learning modalities.

6. Recommendations

1. Improve the provision of learning resources in the implementation of Flexible teaching and learning

2. Planning should be proactively done in the university and regular monitoring be instituted during the implementation of the new modality in teaching to show support on the provision of learning resources to be used by faculty members.

3. Flexible Learning Continuity Plan can be improved in the university/college through collaborative work between the management and faculty members.

4. Enhance the utilization of Flexible Teaching - Learning Modalities by putting-up strategic pedagogical innovations that would immediately respond proactively in highly unpredictable situations in the future.

5. Conduct a Descriptive Survey on the Status of the Policy Implementation of Flexible Learning in Digital Platforms

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