

## Research Article

# A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN THE FLEXIBLE LEARNING IN ONE HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION IN THE PHILIPINES

Received: July 19, 2023

Revised: October 30, 2023

Accepted: November 27, 2023

John Michael Aquino<sup>1\*</sup> Charmine Rivera<sup>2</sup> and May Ann Sancon<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Laguna State Polytechnic University, Philippines

\*Corresponding Author, E-mail: johnmichael.aquino@lspu.edu.ph

## Abstract

Flexible Learning is depicted as a combination of digital and on-campus activities in which students may attend both on-campus and digital sessions. This research aims to determine the experiences of the deans, teachers, and students in the flexible learning as they encounter challenges and how they are addressed by the participants in order to craft an action plan for instructional leaders. This study utilized phenomenological design and purposive sampling to identify the participants who have knowledge and experiences concerning research problems which consists of five deans, five teachers, and five students. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that the participants having similar understanding of flexible learning, have faced various challenges, and have proposed various strategies to address these challenges. Flexible learning has become an advantageous component of the contemporary educational system. This provides numerous opportunities to them, while creating some challenges that must be overcome. It is necessary for teachers, students, and deans to work together to create a successful transition to flexible learning. With the right preparation and support, flexible learning can be beneficial for all involved, allowing them to have security and safety. It allows students to take charge of their own education, teachers to provide innovative teaching methods, and deans to monitor student performance. Action plans focus on enhancing learning efficacy while safeguarding health and safety of everyone. Hence, the ultimate goal is to provide an environment in which all students can learn and grow. The action plan proposed was based on the emerging themes and the participants' suggestions to improve the flexible learning modality.

**Keyword:** Flexible Learning, Challenges in Teaching, Outcomes-Based Education, Quality Education

## Introduction

Flexible Learning (FL) is illustrated as mixture of activities both digital and on-site activities where the Laguna State Polytechnic University (LSPU) students may attend on-campus sessions and digital sessions. Rao (2019) reiterated that FL is a blended learning which is defined as an educational approach that offers modern instructional solutions for teachers and students by combining traditional classroom learning with online learning activities. In addition, Hockly (2018) defined blended learning as a formal education program where a student learns at least in part through the delivery of content and instruction via digital and online media. The notion of teaching methods is based on the idea that teaching is a continual process rather than a one-time method. Blending has several advantages over using a particular learning delivery (Tainter et al., 2017). Moreover, the best elements of both traditional classroom learning and cutting-edge online learning are combined in blended learning. In contrast, flexible learning emphasizes more online and remote learning approaches and gives students autonomy over what, when, where, and how they learn.

In a world where technologies in information and communication increasingly interact with one another, this research addresses several outcomes, implications, and potential future orientations for hybrid teaching in learning institutions (Dziuban et al., 2018). Flexible learning is a style of teaching and learning that allows for a greater degree of personalization and customization (Kearney et al., 2015). It relies heavily on technology, allowing students to access information and resources at their own pace, from any location, and with any device. It often involves digital tools such as online courses, virtual classrooms, and interactive multimedia (Arkoful & Abaidoo, 2015). The goal of flexible learning is to provide an engaging, supportive, and personalized learning experience for all students (Grant & Basye, 2014).

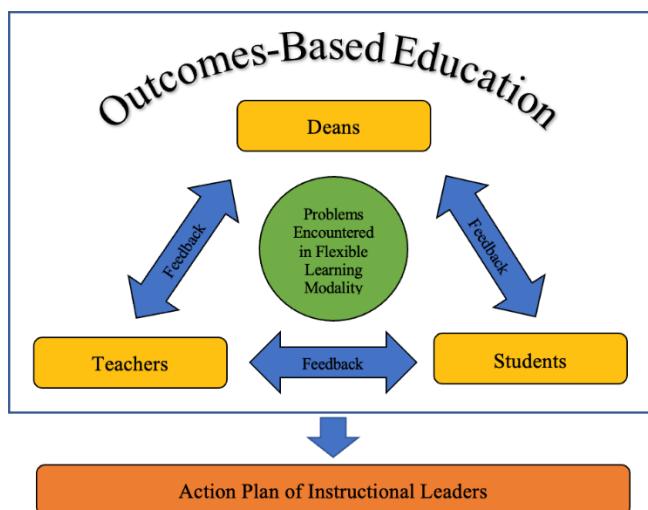
Flexible learning allows students to access educational opportunities regardless of their physical location or lifestyle constraints (Berry & Hughes, 2020). This has opened up new educational possibilities for people, especially those with busy lives, who may not be able to attend traditional classroom settings. However, there are also some challenges associated with flexible learning that need to be addressed. These include the lack of hands-on, instructor-led instruction, a lack of structure and guidance, and the need for students to be self-motivated and organized to learn effectively (Lumadi, 2014). Studying these challenges is important because understanding the issues and obstacles that students may face can help to develop strategies for addressing them (Almaiah et al., 2020). Providing support services and guidance for students to help them stay on track and make the most of the flexible learning experience can make a big difference in their success. By studying the challenges associated with flexible learning, educators can better prepare their students to take advantage of the unique opportunities afforded by flexible learning.

In the CMO No.9 series of 2022, the specifications discussed about the implementation of on-site class in HEIs or Higher Education Institutions. In addition, flexible learning defined operationally by the CHED that it is a pedagogical approach that allows to become flexible in time, place and not solely focused on using technology. It combines different teaching modality in delivering instructions like in-person learning and out-of-classroom modality both online and off-line. Moreover, it is up to the HEIs to decide which learning modalities

to implement, as long as there is learning continuity under the flexible learning modality. HEIs must put in place the necessary safeguards to ensure that students who are unable to actively engage in face-to-face classes are not prejudiced.

In the academic year 2022-2023, one of the prominent and premier higher learning institutions in Laguna utilizing the flexible learning modality. With this, the researcher wants to determine the problems encountered in conducting the said learning modality by the students, teachers, and deans in the institution to help in crafting an action plan for the betterment of delivering instructions for the next school years. Flexible learning has been gaining momentum in higher learning institutions in recent years. It offers a new form of learning where students can learn and work at their own pace and manage their own learning journey. While this has provided many advantages for students, it has also resulted in problems such as lack of motivation, lack of support from teachers, and difficulties in the transition from traditional learning to flexible learning.

This research benefit the organization that come up in an innovative action plans concerning the problems experienced by the deans, teachers and students in the HEI. This action plan was based on the collected data from the respondents of the research.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework Conceptual Framework of a Phenomenological Study on the Challenges Experienced in the Flexible Learning in One Higher Learning Institution in the Philippines Study

The figure shows the relationship of the variables where the researcher wants to explore the problems encountered by Higher Education Institution by the deans, teachers, and students in the implementation of flexible learning which was anchored on the Outcomes-Based Education to craft the instructional leaders of an action plan for the following academic year for quality education.

## Research Questions

The main goal of this research is to determine the lived experiences of the deans, teachers, and students in the flexible learning as they encounter challenges and how these addressed by the respondents. The researchers wants to answer the following research problems.

1. What is the understanding concerning flexible learning?
2. What are the challenges experienced in the Flexible Learning Modality by the following:
  - 2.1 Deans
  - 2.2 Teachers
  - 2.3 Students
3. How these challenges being addressed?
4. What action plan can be proposed based on the emerging themes?

## Methodology

### Research Design

In grasping and explaining the essence of a specific phenomenon, the researcher utilized the design of qualitative research using phenomenological research approach. This approach is indeed applicable in everyday life although it is trying to isolate the researchers' preconceived notions about the phenomenon. It implies that it looks into people's lived experiences to gain a greater understanding of how they interpret their beliefs and emotions (Vagle, 2018).

### Participants

Purposive sampling is an advantageous tool for qualitative research because it allows the researcher to choose a sample that is representative of the population of interest. By selecting participants with relevant experience or knowledge, the researcher is able to get a better understanding of the topic and achieve a more accurate result (Etikan et al., 2016). This type of sampling technique is used in phenomenological studies to ensure that the researcher can accurately capture the experiences of different groups and draw meaningful conclusions (Guest, 2014).

In the case of the study of the present study, the researcher used purposive sampling to select participants who have experience or knowledge relevant to the research question. This could include selecting five deans, five teachers, and five students from the higher learning institution in question. The researchers used interviews or focus groups to obtain in-depth insights into the issues and problems experienced in flexible learning. These insights could then be used to craft an action plan to address the identified issues and problems.

### Instruments

The researcher developed an interview guide for use in gathering information from participants. The interview guide focusing on the understanding of participants in flexible learning, the challenges experienced in flexible learning modality by the deans, teachers, and students and how they addressed these

challenges. With this gathered data, the researcher can have basis in the proposed of action plan. Consequently, it was subjected to content validation by field experts to guarantee that certain interview guide thoroughly cover the context and the study's limitations. Furthermore, content validation of an interview guide in a phenomenology study is a process of verifying the accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions that are asked during the interview. It involves assessing the content of the questions to ensure that they accurately capture the phenomenon being studied and that they are phrased in a way that elicits meaningful responses from the participants (Cypress, 2017). Additionally, content validation ensures that the questions are not leading or biased. This process involves gathering feedback from experts in the field, and sometimes from the study participants themselves, to ensure the questions are appropriate and useful for the study.

#### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The research employed an online platform to collect important information relevant to the current research through Focus Group Discussion, also recognized as "FGD." This is defined as an interactive conversation with at least 6 participants in total designed to enrich and broaden knowledge of a particular circumstance or issue in order to fulfill the study's goal (Hennink, 2013). However, in the present study, the research participants consists of five deans, five teachers, and five students. The researchers utilized thematic analysis with coding and themes to analyze the data. Moreover, the analysis of data involved coding the interviews to identify the main themes and patterns in the data (Terry et al., 2017). The data analyzed using descriptive and interpretive analysis. Descriptive analysis will be used to identify the main themes and patterns in the data. Interpretive analysis will be used to understand the meaning of the data and to identify strategies to address the difficulties and challenges experienced in the flexible learning environment (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015).

#### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher not compensate the participation of research participants because it is voluntary. Furthermore, the data gathered based on the respondents' availability at the most suitable time. The information gathered were kept confidential, which must be made clear to the participants. Audio-recorded and interview transcripts kept and filed safely. Ethical considerations once involved in research will not only mean gaining the confidence and trust of your people surveyed, but they will also represent the credibility and legitimacy of the researcher and the study.

### **Results and Discussion**

This section reveals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation from the collected data from the research participants that answers the statement of the problem. It discusses the results of this research based on the discussion.

### **Understanding The Context of Flexible Learning in One HEI**

All the participants agreed that flexible learning an integration of distance learning and classroom instruction that enables students to study in a variety of contexts and formats. Teacher 1 mentioned that “*...it is a mixture of online learning and also a face to face modality*” and Student 3 stated that “*...it is a combination of online and at the same time students come to school*”.

Additionally, it remains a capacity to learn at any time and in any location. It allows students to obtain educational resources and materials from any location, allowing them to learn in a variety of settings and formats. Student 4 stated that “*...flexible learning is a learning intervention that is responsive to the needs of the students, their circumstances, accessibility, and availability*” which also give emphasize by Dean 2 and 3. It gives students the ability to choose how, when, what, as well as where they learn, thereby expanding their educational opportunities. It can also contribute to the improvement of learning experiences, as students can modify their education to their specific requirements.

In addition, this learning involves the utilization of technology to make simpler learning as reiterated by Dean 3. This entails the use of videos, websites, and simulations. Digital learning may prove used to improve teaching, create improved experiences, and aid in the individual's overall development. Teacher 3 mentioned that “*... when it comes to theories of the course, mostly online or technology based will be used*”. Likewise, it enables students to access data gathered from anywhere and at any time, thereby expanding their learning opportunities.

Consequently, the students' learning can be personalized as they have the capacity to tailor learning to satisfy the unique requirements. It is predicated on the notion that every student has unique learning styles, interests, as well as needs. Students are able to move forward at their own tempo and in the manner that functions best for them thanks to personalized learning. Teacher 5 shared that “*...students can choose whatever form whether it is going to be modular, online or face to face. So, flexible is what's comfortable to the students*”. With this, it enables the teachers to better satisfy the demands of learners and can contribute to the development of an engaging learning environment.

Furthermore, the results of the study corresponds to the existing literature. Teachers have incorporated a variety of methods and techniques for successfully adjusting towards a flexible learning environment (Kebritchi et al., 2017). Strategies include providing faculty members with training and seminars, recording and distributing lectures to students, charting students to guarantee they have access and connectivity, and setting up YouTube channels (Lapitan et al., 2021; Oranburg, 2020). Teachers were additionally urged to develop a plan for implementing flexible learning and monitoring student activities (Huang et al., 2020). Some teachers have also given students the option of modular along with online learning based on their technological access (Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Guangul et al., 2020). When practicable, certain teachers have interacted with students in person. All of these methods have enabled educators to smoothly adapt to a more flexible learning environment.

### **Challenges Experienced in the Flexible Learning Modality**

In the transition period from online learning to flexible learning were both learning modalities were present, there are challenges in the internal stakeholders on how they handle the situations. The deans, teachers, and students are having their own challenges as they experienced in the transition period as they shared during the interviews.

#### *Challenges of the Deans*

The deans are having hardships with their teachers capabilities in technology and the resources of their students. It consists of various factors on how the flexible learning can be implemented well in the University.

D1 shared that “*...there were technical problems faced by the teachers. Doing flexible learning or the online classes is difficult especially when you're not really familiar with the technology*”. D2 added that “*...there are faculties who are not technologically capable*”. When utilizing flexible learning modalities for the first time, the teachers and the students may encounter technical issues. Teachers may be unfamiliar with the necessary technology, while the students may have trouble connecting to the internet.

Likewise, students may find it challenging to embrace the fact of flexible learning, while they may take benefit of the flexibility to be lethargic and unresponsive to teachers. Dean 2 mentioned that “*...there are also faculty members who took advantage of the situation to do more than one thing at the same time, leaving the lessons unexplained and the students' concerns undiscussed*” which was agreed by Dean 4. Teachers may also have trouble adjusting to the technology or using the situation to their advantage rather than instructing.

Additionally, teachers may have issues transitioning to new teaching methods, while students may encounter obstacles such as a lack of Internet access or the need to balance their schoolwork with extracurricular activities as mentioned by Dean 5 that “*...some student don't have access in the internet*”.

The deans participants focuses on the challenges that teachers and students may encounter during the transition towards flexible learning modalities. These obstacles include unfamiliarity with technological advances and difficulty adapting their instruction to the new mode. It may be difficult for students to embrace the truth of flexible learning, to access the Internet, and to manage their studies with extracurricular activities. Teachers and students must be cognizant of potential obstacles and collaborate to ensure an effortless adjustment to flexible learning.

#### *Teachers' Challenges in the Flexible Learning*

The teachers participants indicates that flexible learning modalities present a number of challenges, including the challenges of teaching students online, the lack of confidence that students are engaged and learning, the difficulty with evaluation and managing the classroom, the issues of accommodating students with various professional and personal commitments, the absence of access to technology, and the difficulty of adjusting to a new learning modality. These issues highlight the need for greater assistance for students, teachers, and deans to ensure the success of flexible learning modalities.

Teacher 5 mentioned that “*...I think the major problem is most students have problem with their online connections. most of them have slow internet connections especially when it comes to discussion*” which was also mentioned by teacher 1 and 2. This shows that the connectivity in internet is one of the major hindrances to apply a collegial learning environment not only for students but also for all the people involved in online modality. For students to take an active role in their learning, it is essential that they be given access to the needed gadgets and instructional materials, in addition to support from instructors and administrators. In addition, it is essential that students understand the requirements and expectations for their flexible educational setting and have an understanding of the potential hazards of this modality.

Additionally, Teacher 3 shared that “*...I don't know if my way of teaching is it effective, it is difficult to do assessment in online class, in face to face classes, I am more complacent because I am more stringent or more strict when it comes to classroom management*”. This experience shows that in order for teachers to deliver efficient instruction and support for their students, they must be mindful of the challenges linked to flexible learning. In addition to providing students with precise requirements and implementing strategies to ensure that they are engaged and learning, it is essential to communicate these factors to students. In addition, teachers must be aware of the potential challenges that students might encounter through flexible learning environment as well as be willing to adapt their instructional strategies as necessary.

Moreover, the availability of the classrooms is one of the major concerns of the teachers as they experience the mismatch of the schedules of utilizing classrooms. Teacher 2 stated that “*...sometimes when the schedules of the co-teachers in the classroom do not match with your schedules, there is a conflict of using classroom*”. Deans must ensure that learners and teachers possess the appropriate tools, support, and direction for flexible learning modalities to be successful. In addition, deans need to be conscious of potential hurdles that students may encounter and have a plan to offer the necessary assistance. Ultimately, deans must be cognizant of the possible ethical implications of utilizing flexible learning modalities as well as ensure that students' rights and privacy are protected.

#### ***Students' Experiences in the Flexible Learning***

In light of the assertions, it is readily apparent that flexible learning modalities may present a number of issues. Students all agreed that insufficient access to school facilities, unstable internet connections, background commotion, limited expertise, and lack of academic integrity are the problems they experienced in the start of flexible learning where they started to adjust.

Student 1 and 2 mentioned that “*...not everyone is close to the school*”. Their house is far in the university, the public transportation is limited, there is still Covid 19 and all of the, are still afraid to go outside their houses. Student 3 added that “*...sometimes the data runs out, internet connectivity and background noises*” are the challenges he experienced during flexible learning which was also experienced by the teachers and deans. In addition, issues that include a lack of familiarity with the dean either teacher, or the inability to answer questions or elucidate concepts, can arise. Student 4 shared that “*...I experienced lack of academic integrity, limited knowledge, and sometimes disinterest in studying. Although flexible learning is*

*good, it is still behind the effectiveness of the traditional way of learning. There are knowledge and character traits that can be acquired from the traditional set-up but are 'absent' to flexible classes".* Despite flexible learning modalities possess numerous benefits, they are not as successful as traditional learning methods. Therefore, it is essential to address and resolve any issues that may arise during flexible learning in order to guarantee the best possible learning experience.

The participants disclose that although flexible learning modalities may offer numerous benefits, they are not devoid of disadvantages. Flexible learning modalities may bring about a number of challenges, such as restricted access to educational facilities, inconsistent internet connections, background commotion, lack of knowledge, and loss of academic integrity. In addition, the paragraph states that an absence of experience regarding the dean or the instructor, as well as the inability to answer questions or elucidate topics, may also arise. Therefore, it is crucial to take care of any issues that may arise in order to ensure the highest quality of learning. This paragraph emphasizes which flexible learning modalities come with a variety of challenges, and that it is necessary to be aware of and resolve these issues in order to reap the benefits how flexible learning modalities provide.

The majority of the research regarding flexible learning modalities concentrates on the advantages and benefits for students, instructors, and schools (Batac et al., 2021). Otherwise, the perspective and challenges of parents in flexible learning (Abuhammad, 2020). The modalities have been shown to enhance academic achievement, enhance student engagement, and minimize stress (Alghanmi & Nyazi; Beauchamp & Monk, 2022; Razami & Ibrahim, 2021; Wilcha, 2020). The shift from conventional to adaptable methods of learning does not, however, occur without obstacles. Few studies have examined the potential problems that teachers and students may encounter during the transition to flexible learning modalities (Singh et al., 2021). These obstacles consist of disorientation with the technological advances, difficulty transitioning to the novel way of instruction, and the management of the evolving requirements of flexible learning (Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020). To be able to guarantee an effective transition to flexible learning modalities, it is also necessary to better comprehend how to support teachers and students during the transition. To ensure the efficacy of these educational models, it is crucial that students, teachers, and administrators have a thorough comprehension of the difficulties and obligations linked to flexible learning modalities (Singh et al., 2021). Teachers, students, as well as the deans must also be provided with the necessary support and resources to guarantee the achievement regarding flexible learning modalities.

In addition, prior research has demonstrated which flexible learning modalities may prove advantageous for students in certain circumstances, such as when they have limited availability of classroom resources or must learn at their own tempo (Nilson & Goodson, 2021). In addition, flexible learning modalities present enhanced learning experiences, that can assist students in better comprehending the material. However, research has also revealed that flexible learning modalities present a number of challenges, including lack of access to educational resources (Ferri et al., 2020), unreliable internet access and background noise (Giusti et al., 2021), limited knowledge, and absence of academic integrity (Mste & Weidenhofer, 2022).

In addition, issues such as a lack of acquaintance concerning the dean or instructor and a failure to answer queries or clarify concepts have been identified. To guarantee an effective learning experience, it is essential to be aware of and resolve these potential issues, regardless the possible advantages of flexible learning modes.

### **Process of Addressing the Challenges Experienced by the Deans, Teachers, and Students**

These issues are being addressed through the implementation of flexible learning in the university, in which students and teachers both meet in-person and virtually. D2 mentioned that “...we set up schedules where students and faculties meet together and at times meet virtually, where laboratories and mathematics are to be physically handled while General Education Courses (GECs) can be done virtually”. This enables students to continue their education while maintaining social distance and safety precautions. In addition, Dean 3 stated that “...We give our teachers and students the freedom of choice while there is a course they bare their teaching on”. Teachers are providing students with greater freedom to select in what modality they will in and are attentive to their demands, responding in the way that is most beneficial to the students. By doing so, teachers will know they fulfill their students' requirements while delivering a quality education.

Teachers must remind their students about the protocols, modify their teaching strategies, and be considerate of their students when addressing data issues. As teacher 1 stated that “...teachers reminded their students about the protocols, adjust in teaching strategies, consideration to the students”. In addition, they emphasize the significance of keeping up on conversations and systematic class planning and scheduling. This was reiterated by Teacher 3 that “it has to be systematic, the planning stage is super important and then the scheduling”. This proper scheduling and systematic was agreed by all teachers participants.

Additionally, letters are being sent to ensure appropriate communication and scheduling for the students. Last but not least, the requirement for this novel type of education to be embraced and promoted globally is addressing the primary issue of Internet connectivity. Teacher 5 shared that “...when you taught what internet connection there's really nothing we can do unless of course there would be a free lying of communication for our students to have, but, luckily most of our students are attending their class online, meaning that these students are finding ways those students who don't have gadgets are now have gadgets and now they are actively participating”. The problem with online connection in gadgets is now being addressed because the need for this new form of learning is now being embraced and that it is not being advocated worldwide. This has resulted in more students getting access to technology and participating actively in class.

These solutions address issues relating to the challenges of distance education and personal health and safety (Dhawan, 2020). By installing the classes, students are able to attend classes online and maintain currency with materials or resources. In addition, when students take the time to comprehend the rationale beneath the transition to online learning, they are better able to embrace the situation. Students can also propose enhancements that would improve their learning experience by writing a letter as well as lobbying for improved student-teacher relationships (Bovill, 2020). Students can maintain safety by adhering to personal hygiene protocols, such as donning masks and face shields and carrying alcohol (Desai & Aronoff, 2020).

Consequently, flexible learning represents an innovative and revolutionary approach to education delivery that promotes social separation (Barzegar, 2016). Teachers, students, and deans may work together to make sure that the education received is of the utmost quality by addressing all facets of distance learning. Teachers can ensure that students are capable to learn in a secure and efficient manner by comprehending all of the difficulties that distance learning presents.

### **Advantages of Flexible Learning**

Flexible education is advantageous for students, deans, as well as teachers equally. It enables students to attend classes according to their own timetable, schedule, and location. This allows these individuals to acquire knowledge at their own time and in a more convenient manner as Dean 1 stated that *“...It helps me to be flexible and be able to adapt to the changes and able to perform multi-tasking brought by the Covid-19 Pandemic”*. Additionally, it enables students to look into possibilities for learning that could not be available in traditional environments. Student 4 stated that *“...Flexible learning helps me as a student to have a few convenient class schedules at the risk of the pandemic. I am pro with the traditional but I think this intervention helps me to be technology equipped which I believe is important in today's digital age”*. Students can, for instance, attend classes online or within flexible formats, enabling them to acquire educational experiences coming from a variety of sources.

Flexible learning allows deans to maintain pace with the ever-changing educational landscape. By providing flexible learning alternatives, deans can expand the educational opportunities available to students. This is based on the Dean 3 stated that *“...Flexible learning is a type of education where you do not have to worry about time, place as far as your studies are concerned. It makes the most of the use of technology to provide remote or online study”*. The statement was also stated by the other deans which make sense. This can increase student engagement, retention, and academic performance. In addition, flexible learning can assist deans in creating a more collegial learning environment in which students can work together with one another and with faculty to provide a more integrated learning experience. In addition to facilitating the monitoring of student progress, flexible learning enables deans to view real-time data and reports on student performance.

On the other hand, Flexible learning affords teachers the chance to enhance their teaching efficacy. Teachers may establish a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment if they provide learners with more flexible learning opportunities. In addition, they can personalize the learning experience by providing students with a variety of educational routes and opportunities. As Teacher 5 stated that *“...I prefer face to face mode of teaching. But, again, I think it helped me because again we need to prepare ah, lessons beforehand and to give them modules, we need to prepare this before the coming of classes. So, this help me to organize my lessons properly, to organize the materials properly and to have a set of materials to provide for the students”*. This can result in enhanced student engagement and academic performance. Finally, flexible learning enables teachers to improve the learning experience through the use of technology, such as by providing online lectures, simulated classrooms, and various other digital resources.

Likewise, Teacher 2 stated that “...somehow it's easier... the work when it's flexible or we had what... the option to just teach at home because that avoids travel time, the checking of papers because we can check online, less hassle for us in preparing”. Flexible learning permits teachers to spend less time commuting to and from school, to spend less time checking papers, and to offer students with electronic copies along with access to online resources. It also affords them the opportunity to employ methods of instruction, including music or documentaries, that are not typically employed in a traditional classroom setting.

Meanwhile, flexible learning benefits students in several ways. It enables them to utilize educational resources on their own time and to assume responsibility for their own education. Student 5 shared that “...flexible learning is more helpful when you are face to face talking to each other and the students also follow the protocols” while Student 1 stated that “...students understand better the topics taught by teachers”. Flexible learning allows students to study at their preferred pace and gain greater comprehension of the covered topics. In addition, students are able to identify their assets and weaknesses, permitting them to concentrate on those areas where they require the most assistance which Student 2 mentioned that “... I learned about my strengths and weaknesses in flexible learning because I experienced the two teaching modality at the same time”. Ultimately, flexible learning can assist students in adjusting to the risks presented by the pandemic by enabling them to select from a variety of suitable class schedules and equipping them with technology. In addition to fostering an interactive and collaborative learning environment, flexible learning allows students to talk about and argue topics face-to-face. Flexible learning ultimately helps students grow more involved in their studies, which can contribute to enhanced academic performance.

Flexible learning offers numerous benefits over students, deans, and teachers equally. It allows students to gain knowledge in an improved and convenient manner, while deans and teachers may broaden the educational opportunities accessible to students and improve teaching effectiveness, respectively (Huang et al, 2020). Additionally, flexible learning permits students to assume responsibility for their individual education and to recognize their assets and weaknesses (Rennie & Morrison, 2013).

#### **Action Plans for Instructional Leaders**

The proposed action plans is for instructional leaders to be implemented in internal stakeholders in particular for students, teachers and deans.

Plans for students need to focus on enhancing their learning efficacy and safeguarding their well-being and security. A flexible learning schedule will enable students to more effectively organize their time, whereas an active feedback system will ensure that they comprehend the material and remain motivated. In order to implement social distancing at the university, medical supplies as well as face coverings have to be provided, and each student should occupy a separate seat. This will secure the health and safety of students while enabling them to receive a quality education.

Hence, an action plan for teachers may focus on delivering flexible resources for learning, creating methodical and rigorous deadlines, offering teachers alongside certifications and training, adjusting physical facilities which includes classrooms and schedules, tackling the face-to-face and virtual status of teachers,

upgrading the internet connection in addition to classrooms to provide a hybrid or adaptable mode of instruction, and offering ad hoc learning opportunities. Through these measures, teachers can expect to be able to foster an environment conducive to learning and enhance students' educational experiences.

Moreover, it's the responsibility of deans to foster a flexible learning environment for both students and teachers. To achieve this, they need to develop an orientation program that clarifies the scope and limits of this form of learning. Rather than adhering to a block section format, students may be permitted to create their own choices in particular to schedule. On the other hand, they may consider the schedule GECs at the same time each day so that students can concentrate on fundamental subjects. In addition, they may monitor the student's development and provide feedback and direction as needed. Finally, they ought to have regularly evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies to ensure that they are producing the intended results.

## Conclusion

Flexible learning is growing into an increasingly vital component of the contemporary educational environment. It enables students to get to educational materials in an array of formats and from any location. It additionally allows students to personalize their learning and adapts their experience to their needs. Teachers have adjusted to this learning style by utilizing a variety of methods, such as giving teachers with training as well as seminars, recording and disseminating lessons to students, tracking students to ensure they have internet access and connectivity, and establishing YouTube channels. Therefore, flexible learning has become an advantageous component of the contemporary educational system.

In addition, flexible learning modalities offer numerous opportunities, but also prospective obstacles that must be overcome. It is imperative that teachers, students, and deans become mindful of these issues and collaborate to devise a solution. Making the move to a flexible learning environment is possible with the right preparation and support, allowing the full benefit of these modalities to be realized. With the establishment of flexible learning, teachers are more attentive to the requirements of their students while providing them with a high-quality education. Teachers and students can ensure that they are secure and safe during the successful transition to distance learning by proactive interaction and the enactment of protocols.

Hence, flexible learning is advantageous for students, deans, and teachers equally. It allows students to learn at their own tempo, utilize a variety of educational options, and take charge of their own education. In addition, it allows instructors to employ innovative teaching methods and to monitor student progress more closely. This flexible learning allows deans to examine real-time student performance data and reports and maintain up with an ever-changing pedagogical landscape.

Meanwhile, action plans to feed students, teachers, and deans need to focus on enhancing learning efficacy while safeguarding health and safety. This can be accomplished by developing a flexible learning schedule, providing adaptable learning resources, instituting deadlines, and offering additional support. In addition, deans may develop an orientation program, permit students to construct their own schedules, and

monitor student development. All students can benefit from a flexible and productive learning environment if these measures are taken.

## **Implications**

Flexible learning possesses the potential to increase student achievement, instruction quality, and teaching effectiveness, according to theory. Flexible learning gives students greater control across their own education by allowing them to access resources from any location. It also enables instructors to employ creative teaching strategies and to closely monitor student progress. In addition, deans may examine real-time data and reports on student performance and stay abreast of the evolving educational landscape.

Likewise, the practical implications of flexible learning have been extensive. Students are able to attend classes, complete coursework and exams, and obtain educational materials from a variety of sources. In addition, flexible learning permits instructors to assess student performance and modify their teaching strategies accordingly. Deans can now analyze real-time data and reports on student performance, enabling them to make sensible choices about their educational institutions. All the aforementioned practical implications result in increased student achievement, improved instruction quality, as well as more efficient teaching strategies.

## **Limitations**

The research has numerous limitations. The research is limited to the experiences of the participants, who were chosen using a technique of purposive sampling. Consequently, the study's findings may not be applicable to the population as a whole. Second, the qualitative character of the research makes the results susceptible to researcher bias. Thirdly, since the research was carried out at a distinct institution of higher education, the results might not be applicable to other institutions of higher education. Lastly, the research was limited to what the participants' experiences, so it is possible that other variables that may have influenced the phenomenon were overlooked.

## **Recommendations**

Future research on the practical and theoretical implications of flexible learning should concentrate on the effectiveness of the various employed methods, the security and privacy of students, along with the impact of flexible learning on student achievement. In addition, research may evaluate the efficacy of particular approaches for student engagement, including the provision of video content, the provision of online learning tools, and the provision of interactive activities. Additionally, research should investigate how instructors can utilize flexible learning methods to establish an excellent atmosphere for learning. Finally, research may investigate the impact of flexible learning on student outcomes including college admissions, graduation rates, and employment opportunities.

## References

Abuhammad, S. (2020). Barriers to distance learning during the COVID-19 outbreak: A qualitative review from parents' perspective. *Helijon*, 6(11), e05482.

Alghanmi, S. S., & Nyazi, A. K. (2022). Exploring Students' Engagement in Distance Learning during the Pandemic of COVID-19: A correlational exploratory design. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, 21(3), 46-62.

Almaiah, M. A., Al-Khasawneh, A., & Althunibat, A. (2020). Exploring the critical challenges and factors influencing the E-learning system usage during COVID-19 pandemic. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25(6), 5261-5280.

Arkorful, V., & Abaidoo, N. (2015). The role of e-learning, advantages and disadvantages of its adoption in higher education. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 12(1), 29-42.

Barzegar, R. (2016). Revolution in e-learning by the modern educational model in mobile learning. *Journal of Advances in Computer Engineering and Technology*, 2(1), 45-52.

Batac, K. I. T., Baquiran, J. A., & Agaton, C. B. (2021). Qualitative content analysis of teachers' perceptions and experiences in using blended learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 20(6), 225-243.

Beauchamp, D. M., & Monk, J. M. (2022). Effect of optional assessments on student engagement, learning approach, stress, and perceptions of online learning during COVID-19. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 11(5), 87-101.

Berry, G. R., & Hughes, H. (2020). Integrating work-life balance with 24/7 information and communication technologies: The experience of adult students with online learning. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 34(2), 91-105.

Bovill, C. (2020). *Co-creating learning and teaching: Towards relational pedagogy in higher education*. Critical Publishing.

CMO 9 s. 2022. Accessed September 7, 2022. Retrieved from  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BWkHVT1oCcGvssr20hFalf223zu1mFAO/view?fbclid=IwAR30aCasixhgIbInwrhyUXOjBIXtDUJ8G1quuQbQ\\_fHdiOoX02H64Yg4FgI](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BWkHVT1oCcGvssr20hFalf223zu1mFAO/view?fbclid=IwAR30aCasixhgIbInwrhyUXOjBIXtDUJ8G1quuQbQ_fHdiOoX02H64Yg4FgI)

Cypress, B. S. (2017). Rigor or reliability and validity in qualitative research: Perspectives, strategies, reconceptualization, and recommendations. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, 36(4), 253-263.

Desai, A. N., & Aronoff, D. M. (2020). Masks and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). *Jama*, 323(20), 2103. DOI: 10.1001/jama.2020.6437

Dhawan, S. (2020). Online learning: A panacea in the time of COVID-19 crisis. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 49(1), 5-22.

Dvir, N., & Schatz-Oppenheimer, O. (2020). Novice teachers in a changing reality. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(4), 639-656.

Dziuban, C., Graham, C. R., Moskal, P. D., Norberg, A., & Sicilia, N. (2018). Blended learning: The new normal and emerging technologies. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 15(1), 1-16.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.

Ferri, F., Grifoni, P., & Guzzo, T. (2020). Online learning and emergency remote teaching: Opportunities and challenges in emergency situations. *Societies*, 10(4), 86.

Giusti, L., Mammarella, S., Salza, A., Del Vecchio, S., Ussorio, D., Casacchia, M., & Roncone, R. (2021). Predictors of academic performance during the covid-19 outbreak: Impact of distance education on mental health, social cognition and memory abilities in an Italian university student sample. *BMC Psychology*, 9, 1-17.

Grant, P., & Basye, D. (2014). *Personalized learning: A guide for engaging students with technology*. International Society for Technology in Education.

Guest, G. (2014). Sampling and selecting participants in field research. *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology*, 2, 215-250.

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2, 17-37.

Hennink, M. M. (2013). *Focus group discussions*. Oxford University Press.

Hockly, N. (2018). Blended learning. *Elt Journal*, 72(1), 97-101.

Huang, R. H., Liu, D. J., Tlili, A., Yang, J. F., & Wang, H. H. (2020). *Handbook on facilitating flexible learning during educational disruption: The Chinese experience in maintaining undisrupted learning in COVID-19 outbreak*. Beijing: Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University.

Kearney, M., Burden, K., & Rai, T. (2015). Investigating teachers' adoption of signature mobile pedagogies. *Computers & Education*, 80, 48-57.

Kebritchi, M., Lipschuetz, A., & Santiague, L. (2017). Issues and challenges for teaching successful online courses in higher education: A literature review. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 46(1), 4-29.

Lapitan Jr, L. D., Tiangco, C. E., Sumalinog, D. A. G., Sabarillo, N. S., & Diaz, J. M. (2021). An effective blended online teaching and learning strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education for Chemical Engineers*, 35, 116-131.

Lumadi, M. W. (2014). Challenges besetting teachers in the implementation of e-learning in schools: A guide to curriculum development. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(20), 2814-2814.

Mate, K., & Weidenhofer, J. (2022). Considerations and strategies for effective online assessment with a focus on the biomedical sciences. *Faseb Bioadvances*, 4(1), 9.

Matua, G. A., & Van Der Wal, D. M. (2015). Differentiating between descriptive and interpretive phenomenological research approaches. *Nurse researcher*, 22(6), 22-7. DOI: 10.7748/nr.22.6.22.e1344

Nilson, L. B., & Goodson, L. A. (2021). *Online teaching at its best: Merging instructional design with teaching and learning research*. John Wiley & Sons.

Oranburg, S. (2020). *Distance education in the time of coronavirus: quick and easy strategies for professors*. Duquesne University School of Law Research Paper No. 2020-02.

Rao, V. (2019). Blended learning: A new hybrid teaching methodology. *Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching*, 3(13), 6.

Rasmitadila, R., Aliyyah, R. R., Rachmadtullah, R., Samsudin, A., Syaodih, E., Nurtanto, M., & Tambunan, A. R. S. (2020). The perceptions of primary school teachers of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic period. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 7(2), 90-109.

Razami, H. H., & Ibrahim, R. (2021). Distance education during COVID-19 pandemic: The perceptions and preference of university students in Malaysia towards online learning. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, 12(4), 2021.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14569/IJACSA.2021.0120416>

Rennie, F., & Morrison, T. (2013). *E-learning and social networking handbook: Resources for higher education*. Routledge.

Singh, J., Steele, K., & Singh, L. (2021). Combining the best of online and face-to-face learning: Hybrid and blended learning approach for COVID-19, post vaccine, & post-pandemic world. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 50(2), 140-171.

Tainter, C. R., Wong, N. L., Cudemus-Deseda, G. A., & Bittner, E. A. (2017). The “flipped classroom” model for teaching in the intensive care unit: rationale, practical considerations, and an example of successful implementation. *Journal of Intensive Care Medicine*, 32(3), 187-196.

Vagle, M. D. (2018). *Crafting phenomenological research*. Routledge.

Wilcha, R. J. (2020). Effectiveness of virtual medical teaching during the COVID-19 crisis: systematic review. *JMIR medical education*, 6(2), e20963.