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Blended Learning: Learners Acceptance and Satisfaction Towards the New Normal Education

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Abstract

The study investigated the satisfaction of students towards the blended learning modality. The study utilized data from a total of 500 students and 10 faculty randomly selected from the College of Management, which accounted for 50% of the entire student population. Students expressed their satisfaction with the school's online services, including academic (learning outcomes and delivery), academic support, and student services. They regarded these services as indicative of quality, assessed through a researchers' made instrument constructed from existing literature. Learning outcomes, academic support, and student services provided online shows significant effect on student's satisfaction. The students'supports the premise that investing in ICT infrastructure and educational technology tools contributes to a successful delivery of blended learning. Moving forward, blended learning, if designed appropriately, has the potential to become a prominent method of education, rather than just a temporary solution during a crisis.

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the changes precipitated were what people were most afraid of, not the virus itself. People had little choice but to adapt to these changes in their way of life, affecting practically every societal sector worldwide. It did not make an exception when it came to bringing about change, particularly in the business, economic, and educational fields. In fact, schools and colleges temporarily ceased or mandated localized closures, affecting around 1.7 billion pupils, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020). All tiers of the educational system were harmed by the COVID-19 sickness (Nicola et al., 2020). As explained by Mobo et al. (2022), a number of literary works provided insights into the field of blended learning in the Philippines. With the onset of the global pandemic came a radical change in learning modes that had unfavorable effects on both the educational and economic landscapes. Universities and Basic Education establishments creatively developed substitute teaching methods to comply with the guidelines set forth by the Inter-Agency Task Force on COVID-19 (IATF). The researchers used a quantitative study strategy and methodically gathered and examined numerical data. This approach was frequently used to objectively evaluate theories about people's attitudes and behaviors that were supported by statistical evidence. Students'

The year 2020 has led most of the sectors of the society to come to a halt. All educational institutions have also been declared shut in order to handle the further spread of the Covid-19 virus. The ongoing lockdown has suddenly compelled all teachers to adopt online, teaching-learning practices (Olivier, 2020). With a global health crisis in process, the world has begun to look at the future considerations of the present scenario. Reopening of educational institutions is highly unpredictable and hence, blended learning will

become the future of educational society. The prolonged period of forced closure has pushed educators throughout the globe towards more extensive use of technology to grant their learners continuity in acquiring knowledge without suffering loss. Post pandemic with the opening of educational institutes, especially schools, blended learning will be important to prioritize the health and wellbeing of not only students but teachers as well.

The sudden move to online learning has required new investment in devices, learning platforms, connectivity, training and more. Continuing ahead with blended learning will help in taking full advantage of this investment. By continuing to use the devices and online tools, learners will stay comfortable with technology as part of their education—while educators can continue to explore the potential of online learning. Blended learning being one of the approaches suggested where online and offline strategies can be used together for teaching-learning along with following social distancing norms like work from home, avoiding gathering. Blended learning is a model that implements an online and offline approach to teaching and learning with help of technology which will make the learning process more enhanced and will help in catering to a wide audience especially to those who wish to attend but can't due to geographical distance. This is what will make blended learning a viable model post COVID-19 pandemic (Education Trends, 2020)

Even before pandemic higher education is actively looking to find effective models for providing students with more opportunities and a higher quality of learning. As students focus on extracurricular activities as knowledge resources, they have less time for academic purposes (Pinto & Ramalheira,2017). Thus, blended learning has emerged as a solution that has the potential to enhance their learning experience and engagement (Chen et al.,2010; Lin,2018), that improves access to information (Chaiyama, 2014; Holley & Oliver, 2010; Okaz, 2015), and offers a flexible solution to learning, (Jun & Ling, 2011; Owston et al., 2013; Rahman et al., 2015), while meeting the institutional requirements of higher education.

Student engagement and active participation in their respective courses are a continuing concern in education. New information and communication technologies offering new ways of producing, distributing, and attaining university education in compliance with traditional methods of learning and teaching can improve the situation (Victoria López-Pérez et al.,2011). Learning Management Systems (LMS) are being used to contribute to these improvements, as information systems that facilitate blended learning with both synchronous and asynchronous elements.

Thus, this study focuses on students satisfaction on blended learning focusing on the following: 1.)school's online services; 2.)including academic (learning outcomes and delivery); 3.)academic support, and 4.) student services.

Methodology

The study took place at the Northern Iloilo State University, College of Management. The blended learning method designed had balanced distribution of course content load between traditional face-to-face learning and recently introduced LMS-mediated learning. This method design was chosen because of the study's exploratory nature and because the purpose was not to include prior student digital literacy as a variable affecting the blended learning.

The platform provides several courses from various topics, including innovation, public administration, management, human resource, and entrepreneurship. As defined by Stone,2012) the course was conducted in a flipped-like classroom, incorporating online modules, quizzes, reading, and other online activities, allowing students to engage and attend. Students used blended learning activities such as: presentations,

quizzes, video materials, peer evaluation assessments, and group discussions. All these materials were provided by the lecturer of the subject combined with the information given to students face-to-face in the classroom.

A five-point Likert-type scale was used for assessing students' satisfaction of their blended class experience. Course satisfaction is directly related to students' satisfaction with a course, to perceived improvements in their skills related to the subject, and to the use of information. Satisfaction is related to, three main factors were selected in relation to: (1) platform accessibility, or how comfortable students were with using the online platform; (2) platform content, or the relevance and the online lessons available in the platform, and (3) critical thinking, or how much did blended learning enhance their perceived critical thinking.

Results and Discusssions

Assessment of the Level of Convenience to Teachers in Managing Blended Learning Modality.

Table 1 shows the level of convenience to teachers in Managing Blended Learning

1. deliver the lessons on a regular basis with in-person, online or modular students.	3.200	Convenient
2. accommodate lesson planning to the diverse needs of students, whether they engage in-person, online, or through modular learning.	3.086	Convenient
3. prepare learning materials for in-person, online, or modular modality.	3.371	Convenient
4. monitor in-person, online, or modular modalities of learning to identify students who struggle in completing learning activities.	2.971	Convenient
5. attend to the learning needs and situations of in-person, online or modular students.	3.086	Convenient
6. communicate as needed with in-person, online, or modular students about course progress and changes via email, LMS, etc.	3.114	Convenient
7. provide learners' academic needs with in-person, online, or modular learning modalities.	3.114	Convenient
8. check the activities – written works, performance task, etc. of the learners whether in-person, online, or modular modality.	3.200	Convenient
9. evaluate the in-person, online, or modular students fairly.	3.086	Convenient
10. track the academic progress of learners whether in-person, online, or modular student.	3.200	Convenient
General Assessment	**3.143**	**Convenient**

***Legend**: 1.00 – 1.74 Not Convenient; 1.75 – 2.49 Moderately Convenient; 2.50 – 3.24 Convenient; 3.25 – 4.00 Very Convenient*

Table number 1 reveals the level of convenience for teachers in managing the blended learning modality. The data shows that most teachers are more convenient in preparing learning materials for in-person, online, or modular modality has mean of 3.371 followed by deliberation of the lessons on a regular basis, checking the activities (written works, performance tasks, etc.) of the learners, and tracking the academic progress of learners, whether in-person, online, or modular learners with mean of 3.200. In the third group,

providing learners' academic needs and communicating as needed with in-person, online, or modular students about course progress and changes via email, LMS, etc. with mean of 3.114, next are accommodating lesson planning to the diverse needs of students, attending to the learning needs and situations, and evaluating the in-person, online, or modular students fairly with the mean of 3.086 and the least is monitoring in-person, online, or modular modalities of learning to identify students who struggle in completing learning activities with mean of 2.971. In general, teachers showed a mean of 3.143 interpreted as convenience in using the blended learning modality; although gathering data has a range from highest to lowest, all interpretations land on a convenient level. They can handle the change of modality from in-person, online, or modular modality based on the needs of learners. It is convenient for teachers to utilize blended learning modality. The result is supported by the study of Nweke et al., (2022) when he underscores that educators contemplating the incorporation of blended into their teaching methods. Despite challenges faced by online attendees, such as connectivity issues and mastering certain Zoom features, students acknowledged and appreciated the flexibility offered by the blended approach. This study thus underscores blended learning as a promising teaching methodology. (Nweke et al., 2022)

Assessment on the Level of Acceptability of the Learners in Using Blended Learning Modality Indicator

1. attend class and catch-up in lessons whether in-person, online class, or modular.	2.830	Acceptable
2. adapt with lessons and fulfill academic requirements whether in-person, online, or modular.	2.770	Acceptable
3. get appropriate learning materials for in-person, online, or modular students.	2.795	Acceptable
4. submit tasks and activities on or before the deadline whether in-person, online or modular student	2.915	Acceptable
5. attend by teachers the learners needs and situations of in-person, online, or modular students.	2.760	Acceptable
6. communicate as needed whether in-person, online, or modular to your teachers about course progress and changes via email, LMS, etc.	2.810	Acceptable
7. be guided by teachers in academic needs with in-person, online or modular modality.	2.945	Acceptable
8. submit all activities, homework, and projects whether in-person, online or modular	2.950	Acceptable
9. receive fair grades from teachers whether in-person, online or modular.	2.920	Acceptable
10. update to the academic progress whether in-person, online or modular student.	2.820	Acceptable
General Assessment	**2.852**	**Acceptable**

***Legend**: 1.00 – 1.75 Not Acceptable; 1.76 – 2.50 Moderately Acceptable; 2.51 – 3.25 Acceptable; 3.26 – 4.00 Very Acceptable*

The table number 2 presents the acceptability of learners in using blended learning modality, the gathered data shows that most accepted of learners is the submitting all activities, homework, and projects whether in-person, online or modular with mean of 2.950, followed by being guided by teachers in academic needs with mean of 2.945, receiving fair grades from teachers with mean of 2.920, submitting tasks and activities on or before the deadline with the mean of 2.915, attending class and catch-up in lessons with mean of 2.830, updating to the academic progress with mean of 2.820, communicating as needed to teachers with the mean of 2.810, getting appropriate learning materials with mean of 2.795, adapting with lessons and fulfill academic requirements whether in-person, online, or modular with mean of 2.770 and the least acceptable of learners is attending by teachers the learners needs and situations of in-person, online, or modular with the mean of 2.760. Based on the data gathered, the blended learning modality is accepted by the learners. Generally, all indicators are acceptable with the mean of 2.852 in general assessment. Learners can also adjust to the learning modalities depending on the needs of the situation. The focus shifted to evaluating student satisfaction and academic performance within the blended learning framework, specifically analyzing the impact of different interface designs on online discussion platforms. The study revealed a nuanced correlation: while varied interface designs significantly influenced academic achievements in online discussions, the overall satisfaction levels of students with the courses remained relatively unaffected. (Chen, 2022)

Learners' satisfaction influences the learner approach, attitude and ability to acquire skills, choice of activities, and willingness to continue in a course of action (Liaw & Huang,2013). Students with higher satisfaction tend to be more involved, work harder, spend much more effort completing their duties, pursue challenging goals, thus becoming industrious. Researchers suggest that satisfaction may impact motivation and increase academic achievement. Beside the need to develop abilities and acquire the skills to perform course tasks, students need to develop a strong belief that they can complete these tasks successfully. So, it appears that the motivational component of satisfaction towards blended learning reflects a positive academic performance.

Challenges learners experience in blended learning modality in terms of:

Table 3

STUDY HABITS	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
1. Engagement to the class	3.030	Often
2. Effectiveness of the lesson	3.240	Often
3. Complying with the activities	3.070	Often
General Assessment	**3.113**	**Often**
TECHNOLOGY	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
1. Availability of gadget/s and other learning materials	2.995	Often
2. Internet/data connection	3.065	Often
3. Computer literate	2.810	Often
General Assessment	**2.957**	**Often**
SOCIALIZATION	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
1. Confidence in class	3.070	Often
2. Connection with teachers and classmates	3.200	Often
3. Collaboration of ideas	3.115	Often
General Assessment	**3.128**	**Often**

***Legend**: 1.00 – 1.75 Never; 1.76 – 2.50 Sometimes; 2.51 – 3.25 Often; 3.26 – 4.00 Always*

Table number 3 shows the challenges experienced by the learners in using the blended learning modality. The most common challenges experienced by the learners are socialization with mean of 3.128 with the subchallenges of connecting with teachers and classmates with mean of 3.200, collaborating on ideas with mean of 3.115 and confidence in class with mean of 3.070, next are study habits with mean of 3.113 with sub-challenges of effectiveness of the lesson with the mean of 3.240, complying with the activities mean of 3.070 and engagement in the class with mean of 3.030 and the least is technology with the mean of 2.957 with subchallenges of internet/data connection with mean of 3.065 availability of gadgets and other learning materials with mean of 2.995 and computer literacy with the mean of 2.810. Study habits has a general assessment with the mean of 3.113, while the socialization has mean of 3.128 and the technology has the mean of 2.957. Those are the challenges experienced by the learners in using the Hblended learning modality; in this case, we know that we can encounter challenges like those mentioned above. Addressing these conflicts requires proactive strategies from educators and schools. (Mangaoil's 2018) the research delved into the multifaceted nature of student learning. The study aimed to identify various psychological factors, such as study habits, attitudes, and methods, influencing the academic performance, the findings highlighted the students' prompt completion of academic assignments and their ability to remain focused, devoid of unnecessary delays and distractions. Moreover, students exhibited academic drive, indicating their persistence and determination to succeed in their academic endeavors.

Blended learning is more student-centered and students assume more responsibilities and autonomy, especially in asynchronous learning environments. The flexibility and demanding nature of online learning require students to develop more self-regulatory skills, determined by self-efficacy. Online learning also consists of a high level of interaction, which requires a more active and self-regulated involvement of students, who must access the course independently and form a strategy for their own learning processes. In the study of Liang and Tsai (2018) the results indicated that learners with high internet self-efficacy were more satisfied with an online learning environment that allowed them to use the internet, explore various resources of materials, and expand their knowledge. They tend to study more by using online material and are better engaged in the learning process (Bates & Khasawneh, 2007).

Satisfaction affects students' motivation to learn and engage and, if it is technology-related, the use of technology becomes a motivator. Self-efficacy can be improved during learning through feedback in the form of positive feedback from the experience of using the technology, and positive feedback from the enhancement of learning capacity.

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