Status of learners' support in the college of education of a state university in the Cordillera-Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic brought major disruptions in the operations of Philippine educational systems and institutions which necessitates shifting from the traditional mode of instruction to a flexible-blended mode of teaching-learning to further contain the spread and avoid the perils of the virus. Thus, this study investigated the status of learners support in the College of Education-Ifugao State University-Potia Campus, Philippines. Using survey questionnaires and structured interviews, data were collected from 20 faculty members, 226 students, and 3 Non-teaching staff. Results revealed that Information Support, Learner Intake support, Technological Support, Instructional Support, and Guidance and Counselling Support provided by the College of Education were accessible to both teachers and students. Meanwhile, Library Support Services were found wanting and are slightly accessible to teachers and students. Further, plan of action and measures to reinforce Support for Students who are physically disabled was found inaccessible to teachers and students. Pressing problems paddling the College of Education community include poor and unstable internet connectivity, limited instructional support, lack of technological support, inadequate financial support and funding, skill difficulty in using varied online teaching-learning platforms, burnout, and compliance to academic requirements over quality instruction due to workload-induced and time constraint.

Keywords: Flexible-blended learning, Learners support

1. Introduction

1.1. The Background of the Study

With the onslaught of the COVID-19 virus turning into a global pandemic, it brought major unprecedented disruptions of operations of national and global industries, business

firms, manufacturing factories, multinational companies, and even impede the operation of education systems throughout the globe.

With the scurrying of COVID-19 pandemic, ninety four per cent of the world's student population especially from the low and middle income countries were significantly affected inclusive of mass closure of learning institutions and schools, (UN Policy Brief, August 2020). These impacts of COVID-19 pandemic necessitates a paradigm shift of education culture and structure that can strongly cope with the demands as well as with new emerging trends and challenges of learning experience under the global new normal. At the brunt of the pandemic crisis, disparities in education between and among global citizens continue to foster. Students from high-earning income families have the capability to afford and continue their education than those of the marginalized and vulnerable members of the larger society who cannot able to continue their education training and studies, (UN Report 2020: Education beyond Normal). Correspondingly, in the context of higher education institutions, there are about 89.4% of the total enrolled students who are greatly affected primarily due to the closure of higher education institutions in one hundred eighty five (185) countries, (IAU Global Survey Report, 2020). International organization, governments, and institutions, and even local communities were at the verge of living within the realms of uncertainties as to when this pandemic will totally cease to normalize affairs of the society and all other walks of life.

The Philippines is in no way exempted from the devastating blitzkrieg of the virus on which it likewise extremely affected most of the sectors of the country. Readiness, health programs, existing public policies about mitigating disasters, as well as resiliency of the nation are challenged by the unprecedented spread of the COVID-19 which paralyzed economic operations, social activities and affairs of the global village, including the education sector. Moreover, the education sector and schooling experienced considerable significant disruptions at all levels.

In the education sector, the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education had undertaken responsive measures and exigencies to continue education in the country amidst the pandemic-crisis. Hence, anent this, forwarding support to learners and adapting innovations is indispensable towards making education and schooling experience of Filipino learners meaningful and emancipatory despite struggling with the challenges in this crisis.

Argued by Ogena et. al. (2020), conventional and traditional through a face-to-face mode of teaching-learning, occasionally combined with the use of technology or in tandem with the rudiments of online learning characterizes largely systems of education and schooling experience. With our present situation, opening of classes is yet far from great possibility as it poses great risks to teachers, students, and even families. This requires redirecting our education paths as well as our pedagogical perspectives as we embrace the "new normal" of education culture. It is indisputably imperative and equally

important to seek and pursue alternative teaching-learning platforms to facilitate instruction under this COVID-19 pandemic crisis, since the health and safety of everyone is the utmost priority and concern. As stipulated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Art.14, sec. 1: "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all". Apparently, the Philippine government is exerting efforts and resources so that education in the Philippines will continue to foster despite the pandemic it is facing.

As anchored on the provisions of Republic Act No. 11469 otherwise known as the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act" (CEB-Resolution No. 412-2020), the Commission on Higher Education released CHED Memorandum Order No. 4 series of 2020 that promulgates the guidelines on the implementation of flexible learning in all tertiary learning institutions in the country both public-run and private regulated beginning on Academic Year 2020-2021. Specifically, Section IV and Section V of CHED Memorandum Order No. 4 stipulates clear guidelines on learners support and the use of available and alternative learning modes in lieu to the traditional face-to-face mode of teaching and learning. Extension of the provisions of the legal mandate as well as changes and modifications are subjected to the discretion and decision of the consultative committee and concerned education stakeholders.

As defined, Flexible Learning according to the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is a design and mode of delivery of programs, courses, and learning interventions that address learners' unique needs in terms of differences in place, lesson pacing, learning process, and outcomes and products of learning. It involves the use of digital and non-digital technology, and covers both face-to-face/in-person learning and out-of-classroom learning modes of delivery or a mixed modes of teaching-learning delivery. This customizes learning and instruction as it becomes more student-centered as learners are provided with wide array of opportunities and schedule on dealing with their studies. Further, flexible learning ensures the continuity education amidst the unworkable and infeasibility of traditional modes of teaching and learning due to the negative repercussions of the pandemic crisis. Thus, it has become an urgent need to explore other innovative learning modalities that will facilitate migration from traditional to flexible teaching and learning options towards making education meaningful and accessible to all.

Aware of the aforementioned CHED Memorandum and other national directives in the conduct of classes through flexible learning, Ifugao State University as one of the public Higher Education Institutions issued IFSU Academics Advisory No. 7 or the Conduct of Classes in the New Normal. The said advisory covers series of guidelines to be followed in the conduct of classes amidst this pandemic in line with the guidelines enshrined in the CHED Memorandum pertinent to the conduct of flexible learning. To be abreast with

the demands and to cope with challenges in the education landscape under the 'new normal', Ifugao State University (IFSU) in partnership with University of the Philippine-Open University conducted and sponsored webinar and workshops on June 2-19, 2020, and on August 8-13, 2020 to further capacitate its faculty members and the whole institution in preparation and equip all its working personnel with the necessary skills and essential knowledge needed to cater students with their academic, technical, and emotional needs under the flexible-blended mode of learning. In addition, pursuant to the mandate of the Commission of Higher Education, the University issued IFSU Academic Advisory No. 7, s. 2020 which mandates and directs its faculty members to strategize teaching-learning, design and develop learning modules integrating real life and practical activities as one of the primary learning materials to be provided for students, in lieu with the pure online learning mode of instruction. Combined with the use of Learning Management System, learning modules, set of activities, pre-recorded videos are uploaded regularly, specifically in a weekly basis on which students are given personal log-in credentials to access the uploaded materials. Constructivist by approach which leads to self-directed mode of learning, the students can study at their own pace, time, and place which enable them to construct their own learning based on their own experiences, intrinsically driven to signify meaningful learning.

Since IFSU-Potia Campus is situated in the eastern Cordillera region, surrounded by chain mountain ranges and steep rolling terrains, poor and unstable internet access and connection is one of the prevailing encountered problems in relation to the conduct of flexible learning modality. However, while distance-online education is not a foreign concept IFSU community, it was sought as the most convenient mode of instruction to employ under the "new normal" to pursue education of students, but still there are difficulties and challenges in its adoption and implementation as alternative approach in delivering instruction e.g. unstable internet connection, poor signals, and other ICT-related problems. Likewise, students residing in remote areas of the region like in some areas of Mt. Province, Kalinga, and Ifugao experience the same problem, wherein they find difficulty in attending scheduled online discussions and unable to fully access and completely download the uploaded materials in the school's LMS and to other used online learning platforms primarily because of slow mobile signal and poor internet connection. Likewise, faculty members encounter the same problem on which they experience difficulties in uploading learning modules, set of activities, and other instructional media in the school's LMS because of its incapacity to store files especially to large-sized documents. Similarly, in submission of accomplished activities, the same problem was encountered. Students cannot able to upload in the school's LMS and other used learning platform due to poor and unstable internet connection. Such recurring problem obviously impacted the experience of both students and teachers in their experience in the course. Consequently, this has caused anxiety and undue stress on students which affected their well-being and resulted to emotional and psychological related problems such as

worrisome, fear of academic failure, low self-efficacy and esteem, and trust and confidence problems. In the light of financial aspect, most of them experience financially inadequacy on which they asserted that they cannot afford to buy phones and laptops needed used for online access of learning materials. Despite of the equipped workforce of the institution, still problems prevails challenging human dispositions, pedagogical creativity and teaching innovative skills amidst this unprecedented pandemic, putting all aspects of instruction problematic.

Within the parameters and demands of education practice in the new normal, the College of Education of the Ifugao State University-Potia Campus continuously take responsive measures to pursue its set goals amidst the onslaught of the COVID-19. As spelled out, faculty members are prepared through undergoing extensive trainings to be equipped with the necessary skills and essential knowledge relevant to the conduct of classes in the flexible-blended mode of instruction. As per College Memorandum No. 6, series 2020 and CED Memorandum Order No. 33, s. 2020 which are in line with the IFSU Academic Advisory No. 7, s. 2020 which strictly prohibits the conduct of a traditional face-to-face mode of learning, the faculty members of the College of Education are hereby mandated and directed to strategize in facilitating classes and manage the distribution of learning packs, modules and any learning materials as well, since pure online-virtual classes are also discouraged.

What measures does the university is taking into paramount consideration to address such encountered problem in the learning community? What concrete catch-up plans and concrete interventions are provided to help learners, faculty members, and learning providers to meet their optimum needs and fulfil their maximum satisfaction under the flexible-blended mode of learning during the COVID-19? How do the students and faculty members survive the challenges of instruction amidst this pandemic? Taking all of the aforementioned questions, realities and present conditions challenging IFSU-Potia College of Education in providing support and quality education, thus the thrusts of this study were brought about and established on such precedents. Results of this study yield significant implications to the organizational strategies and management styles of the research locale and of the whole institution concerning on how to excellently pursue education, redefine pedagogy, reengineer curriculum fitting into the needs and demands of a flexible-blended mode of instruction, and reorienting perspectives into the paths of teaching-learning process amidst this COVID-19 pandemic –crisis.

1.2. Review of Related Literature

Abrupt as it was, unprecedented loss of education opportunities as well as access to adequate and quality learning becomes apparent, also making education still effective and efficient despite of this pandemic became and continually remain problematic. However, despite of these consequences, it had driven institutions and educators in

conceptualizing responsive and relevant innovations and revisiting educational systems as to how it will still continue to operate to further cater the needs of learners throughout the globe. This paved the way of strengthening of distance learning approaches, online learning through offering of Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs) either asynchronous or synchronous, and flexible-blended mode of instruction by which it was sought by education providers and stakeholders lead by the Global Education Coalition convened by UNESCO, as the quick, primordial, and practical response to at least cater the need to continue education of learners. Respectively, the term "flexibility" is defined as offering educational choices in the learning environment, as well as customizing a given course of study to meet the learning needs of individual learners. Learning choices can cover flexible class hour and schedule, content of subject-matter, pedagogical approach, instructional materials, use of technology, academic requirements, media of communication, and the mode of completion of courses, (Collis, Vingerhoets, & Moonen, 1997; Goode, Willis, Wolf, & Harris, 2007). In addition, flexible learning is a set of educational approaches concerned with providing learners with increased a variety of choice, convenience, and personalization anchored on their holistic needs. Specifically, flexible learning provides learners with great choices about the learning space, learning schedule, and processes of learning experience by using a range of technologies to support in facilitating instruction. This means that students do not necessarily follow fixed class schedules as prescribed by the school, instead, they are to engage into a flexible approach of teaching-learning process by which they can freely specify at the cost of their most convenient time and schedule to engage and complete their course-studies, (Lee and McLaughlin, 2010; Collis et al., 1997; McMeekin, 1998; Gordon, 2014). As to the processes and dynamics of instruction and pedagogy in the context of a flexible-blended learning, it allows students to determine the sections and the sequence of content according to their desire, pathways of learning, forms of course orientation, size and scope of the course through modulization of the content. In terms of instructional delivery under a flexible-blended mode of learning, students may experience the course in campus-based learning, web-based learning, or in both via different technologies, such as Augmented Reality (AR) and among others. Correspondingly, Wiki (2019) put, with the development of information and communication technologies, new learning modes have appeared that can open more opportunities for flexible learning, such as open learning. Open learning aims to make learners more self-determined and independent, while teachers became more as learning facilitators.

As spelled out, COVID-19 pandemic-crisis jeopardized goals and promises of quality and inclusive education, hence, it is equally important to revisit and redirect education culture and learning experience in terms on how it should be provided and delivered to students to still cater their education needs. The pandemic crisis created quick change in the contexts of learning spaces and in the realm of learning experiences among education systems. To continue access to education, many of the school systems sorted to different

relevant learning options and useful instructional approaches like the flexible-blended and distance-remote learning and teaching-learning modalities like the use of virtual classrooms, augmented reality, learning management systems, other technological innovations and among others. Respectively, during the lockdown and even at the peak of COVID-19 crisis, classroom teachers considered adopting distance learning and online learning characterized with free access to free online teaching-learning resources, (National School Choice Week, 2020).

In the experience of Beijing Normal University and Guangzhou International Middle School Huangpu ZWIE as per the findings of UNESCO (2020), the faculty members used to upload instructional modules and learning materials via learning management system, teach through developed mobile applications, and other learning resources which resulted to creativity and enriching psychomotor skills among students of the aforementioned schools. Further, in the context of University of Columbia (UNESCO, 2020), employing different methods, such as blended learning, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and experiential learning experiences enabled education to continue pursue amidst this pandemic-crisis. No significant results on the academic achievement of students were projected on the use of flexible-blended learning within the span of this pandemic-crisis, they serve to maintain undisrupted learning. In this way, teaching and learning can be flexible rather than fixed, which can help promote easy, engaged and effective learning. Likewise, flexible learning demands a systematize learners support coming from education providers and stakeholders such as the school administration, community, faculty members, and among others. This comes from the reality that learners differ in the light of learning styles, socio-economic status, geo-political location, and financial capability to support their academic needs. Moreover, Mishra, L., Gupta, T., Shree, A. (2020) revealed that online learning is has high time-bound relevance and urgency in the context of COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

With the foregoing problems and impacts brought by the COVID-10 pandemic crisis, it is a primordial necessity to provide learners support so to continue education amidst crisis. As defined by Brindley (2004), learner support in the context of an open, distance, and online learning is referred to as "all activities and elements in education that respond to a known learner or group of learners, and which are designed to assist in the cognitive, affective, and systemic realms of the learning process". Also, effective instruction heavily depends on the rapport and relationship established between teachers and students which ensures quality and transformative learning in the context of an online teaching-learning, (Barbour & Bennett, 2013; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001; Hoyle, 2010; Lai, 2017; Stroet, Opdenakker, & Minnaert, 2013; Velasquez, Graham, & Osguthorpe, 2013).

Also, as opined by De Fazio et.al. (2001), in response to student needs in an online learning environment, inclusive and equitable teaching practices are encouraged. One

aspect that often plays an important role in addressing the needs of non-traditional students is learning support. The dilemma posed is the effective delivery of learning support in an online environment. Support to learners in an online environment include providing stable internet connection, workshops, summer and winter schools, fliers and general study guides to students to explore the skill development process in itself before interpreting the applications of these skills in terms of their discipline focus. Clearly, learner support is not one-dimensional, rather is poses a multidimensional structure as it involves all education stakeholders and learning providers. In this case, learners support under the flexible-blended learning is undeniably essential to yield meaningful learning experience within the parameters of their own learning time and space as this is done through a concerted efforts of the working-arm of a learning institution.

Correspondingly, as to pedagogical support, Gordon (2014) argued that the learner's choices can be offered using several instructional approaches, such as lectures with tutorials, independent study, discussion, seminar groups, debates, student-led discovery approaches and educational gamification. Also, flexibility can be enabled by offering learners several ways of studying like in individual study, study-groups, or collaboratively working with others. Strategizing instruction in an online learning environment demands bringing all entities within the corners of a university to ensure quality instruction and to provide and sustain the holistic needs of the learners in the light of cognitive nurturing, emotional stability, strengthening self-efficacy, and assuring them total well-being and holistic learning experience. Thus, the concept of flexibility is not only confined on the role of students, but rather, it also applies to the capability of a school together with education stakeholders to institutionalize a systematic and comprehensive strategies to meet the optimum satisfaction of leaners on their academic studies. This is supported by Gardon (2014) and Ryan and Tilbury (2013) on which they reasoned out that flexibility is not only an attribute of students, but also a feature of educational strategies at the institution level.

As to learning resources support, (Collis 2004; Casey, 2005) cited in UNESCO Report (2020) discussed that in addition to instructor created content, the resource created by learners, libraries, even high-quality resources from the web can also be the potential choices. With regards to the modality of the resources support, Gordon (2014) asserted that flexibility can be indicated by using a range of media formats, such as podcasts, narrated screen capture, the full video of lectures and software and the use Open Educational Resources (OER) which can also help in making learning flexible in a way that teacher contextualizes its use that is suitable to the needs of the students. Also, the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (2020) strongly urged schools, learning spaces, and education teams to prioritize addressing the academic and learning needs of students and not necessarily exacerbating present tensions brought by the present situation, as well as advancing measures to ease learning stresses and anxieties in the context of online and distance learning. Measures to consider include providing

modules, learning kits, and hygiene kits to protect and preserve their total health and well-being.

It is noted that the reviewed literature and studies have contribution to the points of relationships between and among of the variables used under a flexible-blended learning. Further, gaps in the previous study were actually observed and noticed such as the immediate contexts of the majority of previous studies is on a typical and conventional flexible-blended learning environment, hence not necessarily a foreign concept to many people and educational institutions. Also, the reviewed related studies were more on the pedagogical support provided by the teachers, hence it is limited and confined to the role of the teacher in a classroom environment, missing out other important key factors and actions coming from the larger scale of learning institutions as to the response and support to students during their education training and schooling under the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is in the intention of this study to contribute into the existing body of generated knowledge on which its locus is on investigating provided learners support at a departmental under the context of flexible-blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This simply means that the scope of this paper goes beyond the portals of the classroom, but it also involves investigating the roles of the different units of the College of Education and its stakeholders in providing support to learners as they continue their learning opportunities this pandemic crisis.

1.3. Research Questions

Generally, this research study focuses on the status of learners support provided by the IFSU-Potia College of Education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the perceived level of accessibility of the learners support provided by the IFSU-Potia College of Education to students along the following areas:

    a. Information Support;

    b. Learner Intake Support;

    c. Technological Support;

    d. Pedagogical Support;

    e. Counselling Services;

    f. Library Support; and

    g. Support with Students with Different Abilities.

2. Is there a significant difference between the perception of teachers and students in the level of accessibility of learners support provided by the IFSU-Potia College of Education?

3. What problems, difficulties, and challenges do the respondents encountered (or are encountering) in providing institutional learners support system along the aforementioned areas?

4. What recommendations, interventions, and policies can be proposed to resolve the problems and difficulties encountered in providing institutional learners support for the students?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in the level of accessibility of learners support as perceived by teachers and students.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a combination of the quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The quantitative approach follows the descriptive-comparative design where the profile of the respondents and the level of accessibility of institutional learners support indicated by a survey questionnaire is determined. Also, Spearman Rho Correlation test was used to determine the difference between the perception of the faculty members and the students on the learners support provided by the College of Education. The qualitative approach, specifically structured type of interview, was used to gather information as to the perceived encountered problems and difficulties in providing institutional learners support to the students. Further, thematic coding and deductive reasoning was used to analyse and interpret the qualitative responses of the respondents.

2.2 Research Participants and Sampling Procedures

There are three (3) groups of key and primary respondents in the conduct of the study: Twenty (20) Faculty members, students, and Non-teaching Personnel of IFSU-Potia Campus as partner of the College Education in providing support to students. It has to be noted that the Faculty members and the concerned Non-teaching Staff Personnel were all purposively chosen while students are randomly chosen as

respondents of the study. Respectively, on selecting the target student-respondents of the study, Cochran's Formula was used to compute for the sample size of the total population of the College of Education. After determining the needed sample size of the total population of students, sample units are randomly chosen employing the simple random sampling method since they come from a single homogenous stratum- Education Students, though they differ in their year level and areas of specialization. Thus, there were one hundred one (101) selected respondents from the 1st year level; seventy (70) from the 2nd year level; fifty four (54) from 3rd year level; and nine (9) from the 4th year level. Overall, there were identified two hundred twenty five (225) student-respondents of the survey out of five hundred forty three (543) total student population of the College of Education.

The prospective respondents are all adopting the flexible-blended mode of instruction by which different learning platforms and auxiliary modalities like Learning Management System, Google Classroom, Schoology, Edmodo, MS-Teams and among others are used to facilitate classes and ensure an accessible and effective instruction under the new normal.

2.3 Instrumentation

To gather the needed data, a researcher-made survey-questionnaire was used. The tool is called, "Level of Accessibility of Learners Support Survey-Questionnaire." This tool has three main parts namely: a) Profile. This is used to gather information on respondents' characteristics; b) Learners Support Survey-Questionnaire – This is used to gather information as to the accessibility of institutional learners support provided for the students; c) Semi-structured Interview. This is used to gather information on teachers' experiences and problems felt in providing institutional learners support. Also, it explores students' encounters in the institutional learners support provided to them by the university. Further, this is also used to gather the perspectives ad responses of the non-teaching staff as partner-providers of the College of Education in delivering system of learners support amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

To establish the validity and reliability of the researcher-made questionnaire, the 30-item test-questionnaire were subjected into two types of test analysis: Content validity by internal experts and specialists in education and pedagogy, and Reliability test to examine its internal consistency. After the validation, the instrument was pilot-tested at the other colleges of the Campus: College of Criminal Justice Education, College of Business Management, and the College of Computing Sciences. Preliminary data gathered were subjected to reliability test and analysis using Cronbach's Alpha on which the computed reliability is .904- rated as highly reliable.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers prepared the needed instrument for the gathering of data and information from the respective respondents of the study. Then the tools were subjected to content validity and reliability test by experts; the examining panel members critiqued the instrument for finalization.

After the finalization of the data gathering tool, it was pilot-tested from other colleges and departments of the University to check the validity and reliability of the items of the survey questionnaire. After determining the reliability coefficients, revisions were made to improve the instrument. Afterwhich, the finalized data gathering tool was floated and retrieved. The gathered data were encoded, coded, and treated statistically for analysis and interpretation.

2.5. Data Analysis

In describing the profile of respondents, computation of frequency and percentages were used. In describing the level of accessibility of institutional learners support, frequency count, computation of means, and standard deviation were used. In determining the level of accessibility of the institutional learners support, the Likert Scale model was used.

To determine whether there is a significant difference on the level of accessibility of learners support as perceived by teachers and students, Spearman rho test of correlation was used. Also, normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk was made first before subjecting the data into comparative analysis.

In treating the qualitative statements on problems and recommendations in providing institutional learners support, interpretive analysis, thematic coding, categorization, and deductive reasoning technique of writing were used. In doing this, qualitative responses of the non-teaching personnel, teacher-respondents, and student-respondents were identified and were separated and grouped accordingly. After clustering the responses of the two groups of respondents, categorization was made to index and frame ideas from the gathered qualitative data. After which, data transcription and thematic coding and analysis were made to generate theories and themes from the experiences of the respondents.

3. Results and Discussion

Section A- Level of Accessibility of Learners Support

Research Question 1: *What is the perceived level of accessibility of the learners support provided by the IFSU-Potia College of Education to students along with Information*

support, Learner intake support, Technological support, Instructional support, Guidance and counselling services support, Library support, and Support for students who are physically disabled?

Table 1: Mean Distribution of Level of Accessibility of Information Support

ITEM INDICATORS	TEACHERS		STUDENTS	
	Mean	Qualitative Description	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. School website providing information about admission procedures, program and contact information, frequently asked questions, scholarship opportunities and other school services under the new normal.	3.05	Accessible	3.13	Accessible
2. Social media page informing students about school profile, activities, and services.	3.29	Highly Accessible	3.24	Accessible
3. Automated Response i.e. chat box, ticketing system, etc.	2.57	Accessible	3.03	Accessible
4. Online help desk to cater students' concern and queries about the technical and academic aspects under the new normal.	2.62	Accessible	2.83	Accessible
Overall Mean	2.88	Accessible	3.06	Accessible

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Not Accessible); 1.76-2.50 (Partially Accessible); 2.51-3.25 (Accessible); 3.26-4.00 (Highly Accessible)

Tabulated data show that the level of accessibility of Information support is rated as "Accessible" as perceived by teachers and students with a comparable general mean of 2.88 and 3.06 respectively. It is interesting to note that teacher-respondents rated Item No. 2 which pertains about the availability of social media

i.e. Facebook Page informing students about school profile, activities, and services as "Highly Accessible" with the highest mean of 3.29 respectively.

       Overall results further indicate that the teacher-respondents and student-respondents shared similar perception on the level of accessibility of information support provided by the College of Education. Further, results show that the overall information support is accessible using all available and existing means and resources of the College department.

       This subscribes to Pamulaklakin et al., (2015), on which teaching and tutoring, advising and counselling, and information and administration are the main institutional systems involved in learner support that must be provided by the institution under a flexible-blended learning environment.

Table 2: Mean Distribution of Learners Support in terms of Intake Assessment

ITEM INDICATORS	TEACHERS		STUDENTS	
	Mean	Qualitative Description	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Intake assessment of students and advising services.	2.71	Accessible	2.94	Accessible
2. Record keeping and profiling system of students.	2.86	Accessible	3.06	Accessible
3. Registration assistance support e.g. online enrollment and registration.	2.52	Accessible	3.00	Accessible
4. Financial aid/assistance program for students.	2.71	Accessible	2.79	Accessible
5. Online general orientation for the students informing them about university policies and guidelines under the new normal.	2.86	Accessible	3.14	Accessible
Overall Mean	2.73	Accessible	2.99	Accessible

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Not Accessible); 1.76-2.50 (Partially Accessible);
2.51-3.25 (Accessible); 3.26-4.00 (Highly Accessible)

       The tabulated data show that the level of accessibility of intake support is "Accessible" as perceived by teachers and students with a comparable general mean of 2.73 and 2.99 respectively. Results further show that teacher-respondents and student-respondents share same perception on the level of accessiblity of learner intake support provided by the College of Education. This means therefore that the learner intake support provided for students during enrolment is reasonably available and easily delivered using existing means and resources of the College department.

Information support as integral element of administrative support is essentially improtant asserted by Sankar (2020) on which he explained that providing adequate administrative support in a flexible-blended learning is a contributory factor in making online learning quality and results to positive experience of students upon entry in a school, as this incites first impression of the quality of services of student support being provided in the school.

Daniel (2000) points out that a key component of supported open and online learning is effective delivery and provision of system of support. Effective administrative support as well as design of learning resources are contributory factor in learner satisfaction and in creating supportive learning environment.

Table 3: Mean Distribution of Learners Support in terms of Technological Support

ITEM INDICATORS	TEACHERS		STUDENTS	
	Mean	Qualitative Description	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Information and Communication Technology system and facilities like computer laboratories, internet and wireless connections, video-conferencing, social networking, and other media applications.	2.81	Accessible	2.81	Accessible
2. School Learning Management System and other learning platforms used under the flexible-blended mode of instruction.	3.00	Accessible	2.97	Accessible
3. Low profile educational technologies such as radio, televisions, cellphones, and recording materials used to transmit information and learning purposes.	2.71	Accessible	2.88	Accessible
4. Stable internet connection used for flexible-blended mode of teaching-learning.	2.29	Partially Accessible	2.58	Accessible
5. Information and Communication Technology team which serve as an overseer on the use of school's Learning Management System.	2.43	Partially Accessible	2.83	Accessible
Overall Mean	2.65	Accessible	2.81	Accessible

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Not Accessible); 1.76-2.50 (Partially Accessible);
2.51-3.25 (Accessible); 3.26-4.00 (Highly Accessible)

The tabulated data show that the level of accessibility of Technological Support is "Accessible" as perceived by teachers and students with a comparable general mean of 2.65 and 2.81 respectively. This means that teacher-respondents and student-respondents have similar sentiment on the overall level fof accessibility of instructional support provided by the College of Education. Also,

results evidently show that the College of Education can effectively provide and deliver instructional support using existing available resources and system of technology used in facilitating teaching-learning. However, it is considerable to note that Item 4 and 5 which pertains to stable internet connection used for flexible-blended mode of teaching-learning; and Information and Communication Technology team which serve as an overseer on the use of school's Learning Management System were described as "Partially Accesible" by the teacher-respondents obtaining a mean of 2.29 and 2.43 respectively. This means that teacher-respondents viewed that the quality of internet connection in the College department is quite unstable and poor, hence slightly accessible. Also, technical support coming from ICT Team was perceived trivial and is moderately delivered.

Huang, R.H. et. Al. (2020), opined that in a disrupted learning brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, a wide array of variety of learning opprotunities and options must be provided to students as to location of learning, teaching-learning resources, pedagogical and instructional resources, learning activities, and a system of support for faculty members and more especially for learners, which ensures engaging, pragmatic, and effective learning. Further, Sankar (2020) revealed that a strong and adequate technological support in an online learning in higher education yielded positive relationship between the quality of e-learning and the learning experience of the college students. Further, in Ogena, et. Al. (2020) revealed that effective learning experience in a flexible-blended learning requires concerted effort between and among education stakholders in providing suitable learning applications, platforms, and instructional technologies used in facilitating teaching-learning under the new normal. Moreover, Peňalvo et. al. (2020), it is imperative to advance comprehensive and responsive plans with concrete initiatives in using technology as an important element in an online learning environment.

Also, in Anderson (2004), the use of web-based technologies and the use of internet in learning enables critical thinking primarily because it incites independent and self-directed mode of study and learning experience.

In this, technological support strengthens and improves the teaching-learning experience of teachers and learners in a flexible-blended learning environment, as learning becomes more, by nature, independent and student-centered. This comes from the fact that through different learning platforms and modalities entwined with strong internet connection, can definitely meet the needs of students with different needs and in different contexts.

Table 4: Mean Distribution of Learners Support in terms of Instructional Support

	TEACHERS	STUDENTS

ITEM INDICATORS	Mean	Qualitative Description	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Students support program on how to study effectively under flexible-blended learning mode of instruction.	2.62	Accessible	3.01	Accessible
2. Learning platforms and applications in delivering virtual or online classes like Google classroom, *Schoology*, Moodle, Edmodo, Zoom, Discord and the like.	3.14	Accessible	3.17	Accessible
3. Learning tools and resources i.e. grammar and plagiarism checker for technical writing, for proper referencing and citation, for annotating online resources, etc.	2.05	Partially Accessible	2.86	Accessible
4. Support program to further stimulate students' motivation to study under flexible-blended mode of instruction e.g. *Online tutoring and consultation*.	2.38	Partially Accessible	2.77	Accessible
5. Designed instructional module/learning materials across all courses and disciplines.	2.67	Partially Accessible	2.94	Accessible
Overall Mean	2.57	Accessible	2.95	Accessible

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Not Accessible); 1.76-2.50 (Partially Accessible);
2.51-3.25 (Accessible); 3.26-4.00 (Highly Accessible)

The tabulated data show that the level of accessibility of pedagogical support is "Accessible" as perceived by teachers and students with a comparable general mean of 2.57 and 2.95 respectively. The teacher respondents described item 3, 4 and 5 as " Partially Accessible" with the mean of 2.05, 2.38, and 2.67 respectively, which only show that there is quite discrepancy between the perception of teachers and students as to the accessibility of some domains of instructional support. Teacher-respondents perceived that learning resources such as grammar checker, plagiarism checker, referencing techniques, and the like, as well as support programs like online tutoring and consultation to stimulate students' motivation, and designed learning modules are moderately provided and slightly accessed by them. In contrast, sudent-respondents perceived such aforementioned domains as favorably provided and delivered to them.

Since Instructional Support primarily the duty and responsibility of faculty members, this ascribes to Moralista & Oducado (2020), on which they opined that faculty of higher education institutions must be provided with continued support

and training in instruction and pedagogy as they adapt into the instructional trends and pedagogical innovations under the new normal in the higher education landscape context and as they adopt the instructional challenges under the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Also, this subscribes to the Epigeum (2019) as cited by Huang, R.H. (2020) on which learning materials and teaching-learning modalities must be provided in a disrupted learning as brought by this COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the context of flexible-blended learning. These learning materials consist a wide variety of digitally formatted resources e.g. images, audio-visuals, simulations, and learning modules suitable for online learning.

Further, as supported in Bailey & Card (2009), he reasonedout that effective online teachers demonstrate understanding and compassion to learners. Moreover, Hoyle (2010) maintains that teachers must exert effort in doing his tasks not only within the parameters of instruction but also on giving significant advices and encouragement to cope with the demands of an online learning.

Moreover, in a study conducted by Bayrhuber et al. (2008), it was affirmed that instructional support in a flexible-blended learning has a significant impact on the learner's interest and performance in school.

Table 5: Mean Distribution of Learners Support in terms of Counselling Sevices

ITEM INDICATORS	TEACHERS		STUDENTS	
	Mean	Qualitative Description	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. School guidance and counselling unit to cater the counselling needs of the students.	2.81	Accessible	2.99	Accessible
2. Stress-management program and coping mechanism against learning anxiety, frustrations, pressures and other factors brought by the pandemic.	2.57	Accessible	2.92	Accessible
3. Academic placement program and services to help students to identify their learning needs.	2.43	Partially Accessible	2.85	Accessible
4. Plan of action and intervention for issues and problems raised/to be raised by students relevant to stress and pressures.	2.43	Partially Accessible	2.75	Accessible
Overall Mean	2.56	Accessible	2.88	Accessible

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Not Accessible); 1.76-2.50 (Partially Accessible);
2.51-3.25 (Accessible); 3.26-4.00 (Highly Accessible)

The tabulated data show that the overall level of accessibility in terms of counselling services is "Accessible" as perceived by teachers and students with a comparable general mean of 2.56 and 2.88 respectively. However, it is worth considering that results also show that teacher-respondents perceived that academic placement program and services which help students identfy their learning needs as placed in Item No. 3, and crafted plan of action and intervention for possible stress and anxiety related issues as placed in Item No. 4 obtained a weighted mean of 2.43, and were rated as "Partially Accessible" by the teacher-respeondents. This simply means that teachers felt that learners support which addressing the learning needs of the students as well as responsive plan of action and exegencies which caters plausible stress-related problems of students are moderately provided and slightly accessed.

Obviously according to Brindley (2014), not all students enter online studies with this set of aptitudes and skills. Tertiary level institutions dedicated to delivering distance education usually have crafted comprehensive suite of support services and resources to help learners become engaged with the institution develop the necessary skills and stimulate internal motivation during the course of ttheir studies and more importantly with the actual industry to which they are being prepared for. These system of support comprise library services, guidance and counselling, aptitude assessment, establishing partnership and collaboration with the community, teamworks, and administrative support services.

Table 6: Mean Distribution of Learners Support in terms of Library Services

ITEM INDICATORS	TEACHERS		STUDENTS	
	Mean	Qualitative Description	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Open Educational Resources and learning resources like e-journals, database, encyclopedia, eBooks, etc.	2.52	Accessible	2.69	Accessible
2. Information on how to access library support, references, and learning resources.	2.29	Partially Accessible	2.69	Accessible
3. Tutorial services for students on how to access library services.	2.24	Partially Accessible	2.47	Partially Accessible

Overall Mean	2.35	Partially Accessible	2.66	Accessible

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Not Accessible); 1.76-2.50 (Partially Accessible); 2.51-3.25 (Accessible); 3.26-4.00 (Highly Accessible)

The tabulated data show that the overall level of accessibility in terms of Library Support is "Partially Accessible" as perceived by teacher-respondents with a general mean of 2.35, while student-respondents perceived it as "Accessible" with a weighted mean of 2.66 respectively. It is evidently noticeable that as results show, teacher-respondents and student-respondents have different perception and perspectives as to the accessibility of Library support and services. Further, results reveal that the teacher-respondents and student-respondents rated that tutorial services for students on how to access library services and references as placed in Item No. 3 2.24 and 2.47 on which they both attested that such domain of library support is "Partially Accessible". Also, teacher-respondents perceived that information and details on how to access library support, e-books, and learning resources and references as placed in Item No. 4 as "Partially Accessible" as it obtained a weighted mean of 2.24.

Moreover, Tyler (2015) said that, online learners require an academic library which provides a comprehensive host of resources and services around the clock regardless of whether they have access to an on-site campus. Fabro et al. (2008), opined that librarians must continually reevaluate the ways in which they deliver services to students who are not visiting the physical library while also retaining the human factor during communications and interactions in the context of e-services. Currently, many resources necessary for learners are still available only in a print format; therefore, a balance interms of funding and access is needed to provide a wide spectrum of digital content.

Table 7: Mean Distribution of Learners Support in terms of Support to Students who are Physically Challenged

ITEM INDICATORS	TEACHERS		STUDENTS	
	Mean	Qualitative Description	Mean	Qualitative Description

1. Program or plan of action for inclusive education	1.86	Partially Accessible	1.71	Not Accessible
2. Alternative formats for learning materials to cater the needs of students with different abilities.	1.71	Not Accessible	1.67	Not Accessible
3. Assistive technologies/devices for students with special abilities.	1.48	Not Accessible	1.69	Not Accessible
4. Referral programs for students with specific and special needs.	1.52	Not Accessible	1.80	Partially Accessible
Overall Mean	1.64	Not Accessible	1.72	Not Accessible

The tabulated data show that the overall level of accessibility of learner support in terms of support to students who are physically challenged as perceived by teacher-students and student-respondents is "Not Accessible" with a general weighted mean of 1.64 and 1.72 respectively. This means that there is a low extent of providing system of support to students with disabilities and with special needs. However, it is interesting to note that teacher-respondents perceived that program or plan of action for inclusive education as placed in Item No. 1 is "Partially Accessible" which achieved a general mean of 1.86. Also, student-respondents rated Item No. 4 which pertains to referral programs for students with speicific and speical needs as "Partially Accessible" garnering a mean of 1.80. Results reveal that teacher-respondents felt that plan of action for inclusive education under the COVID-19 pandemic is slightly provided and deleivere. Alos, student-respondents attested that referral programs for students with specific and special needs are moderately delivered and provided.

Increasing numbers of students with disabilities are recognizing the benefits of flexible blended learning and realizing the enhanced access it provides to tertiary educational opportunities. Flexibility in terms of location of study, class scheduling, and mode of delivery of course programs under a distance and online platform provide students with disabilities with what may be their first access to higher education (Paist, 1995; Kim-Rupnow, Dowrick, & Burke, 2001). Respectively, learners with disabilities under a distance and online mode of learning encounter learning barriers as well as constraints such as behavioral patterns and characteristics of the learner, life situations, weight of workload, locus of control, study habit and management, satisfaction, social relationship, and teacher-student interactions.

A.1 Auxiliary system of support provided for teachers and students

a. *Student support services as Perceived by partner Non-Teaching Personnel*

Needless to say, providing learners' support is a collaborative efforts between and among the entities in a learning institution and education stakeholders. Some of the learners support provided for teachers and students include domains of Health and Safety, related Students' programs and services, and registration and information support.

As to the health and safety of the students, Nurse X shared her initiatives on which she said that,

"In this situation we are experiencing right now, it is my prime and utmost duty to secure the health and well-being of the Campus community, giving premium importance to students of course. I do this by reaching them out through sending chat and text messages asking them on their health condition and concerns, giving vitamin-supplements to those who need it, and even attending and entertaining their concerns even beyond office hours."

In the light of Student Services, Chairperson X affirmed that the Campus is exerting efforts to extend help and support to all students amidst the crisis, on which he stated that,

"Devices such as Pocket Wi-Fi are provided to students through raffle draws sponsored by SMART telecom Philippines. Such activity and ancillary technology device used for learning are quite essential to students as they can cope with the demands of their online classes. Relief goods and medical cash assistance are also provided for students to at least address their basic necessities and health needs in this time of pandemic. Virtual orientation was also made in order for students to be aware of the available school services."

In ensuring the mental and emotional well-being of the students as well as to help them to cope with their stresses and anxieties in learning, Guidance Counsellor X shared programs and initiatives in line with learners support.

"We tied up with the DWAL FM Radio Station in Sta. Maria from which talks and segments about mental health are being aired. This program is also publicly live-streamed at Facebook and IFSU FB-Group Page to be more accessible to all students. Further, we are conducting Synchronous

and Asynchronous tele-counselling programs to students thru Messenger Group chats and video calls. Partnership and collaboration were also forged between IFSU and SMART Telecom in launching SMART GIGA Career program for students."

SECTION- B. Significance in the perception on the level of accessibility between teachers and students

Research Question 2: *Is there a significant difference between the perception of teachers and students in the level of accessibility of learners support provided by the IFSU-Potia College of Education?*

			TEACHER						
Spearman rho			Inform ation Suppor t	Learne r Intake Suppor t	Technolo gical Support	Instructi onal Support	Counsell ing Services	Library Support	Support to Students who are Physically Challenged
STUDENTS	Informa tion Support	Correlation Coefficient	.380	.352	.442	.539*	.543*	.333	.429
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.109	.139	.058	.017	.016	.163	.067
		N	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
	Learner Intake Support	Correlation Coefficient	.287	.487*	.025	.403	.328	.333	.059
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.234	.034	.920	.087	.170	.163	.809
		N	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
	Technol ogical Support	Correlation Coefficient	.337	.480*	.159	.369	.526*	.506*	-.061
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.159	.037	.515	.120	.021	.027	.803
		N	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
	Instruct ional Support	Correlation Coefficient	.408	.615**	.268	.650**	.560*	.537*	.284
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.083	.005	.267	.003	.013	.018	.239
		N	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
	Counsel ling Service	Correlation Coefficient	.112	.519*	.044	.265	.453	.339	-.059
		Sig. (2-	.648	.023	.857	.273	.051	.156	.809

s	tailed)							
	N	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Library Support	Correlation Coefficient	.112	.519*	.044	.265	.453	.339	-.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.648	.023	.857	.273	.051	.156	.809
	N	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Support to Students who are Physically Challenged	Correlation Coefficient	-.437	-.377	-.121	-.165	-.020	.013	.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.061	.112	.623	.500	.936	.957	.522
	N	19	19	19	19	19	19	19

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To determine whether there is a significant difference on the perception of teacher-respondents and student-respondents as to the level of accessibility of learners support provided by the College of Education, Spearman rho correlation test was used since normality test shows that the data are not normally distributed.

Results show that there is no significant difference on the perception of teacher-respondents and student-respondents on the domains of Information Support ($r=.109$, $p> .05$), Technological Support ($r=.515$, $p> .05$), Counselling Services ($r= .051$, $p> .05$), Library Services ($r=.156$, $p> .05$), and Support to Physically Challenged Students ($r=.522$, $p> .05$). This indicates that teachers and students share similar sentiment and perspective as to the level of accessibility of the aforementioned domains of learners support. However, it is equally important to note that as results show, there is a significant difference on the perception of teacher-respondents and student-respondents in terms of Learner Intake Support ($r=.035$, $p> .05$) and Instructional Support ($r= .003$, $p> .05$). This indicates that teachers and students significantly differ on their perspectives as to the level of accessibility of learners support in terms of Administrative Support and Instructional Support delivered to students.

Section C: Problems felt in providing Learners support

Research Question 3: *What problems, difficulties, and challenges do the respondents encountered (or are encountering) in providing institutional learners support system along the aforementioned areas?*

a. *Lack of Technical Support in Learning and Limited Learning Resources*

In providing learners' support, teacher-respondents affirmed that there is a lack technical support in learning to students. Teacher A further stated that,

"In the College of Education, there are no acquired licensed software used for technical writing outputs e.g. Plagiarism and grammar checker. As we engaged into a new approach of teaching under the flexible-blended mode of learning, we find it difficult and challenging on our part as teachers, and to students as well, due to the fact that there is a limited learning resources provided like reference materials e.g. books for new course-subjects"

b. *Technical Problems and Glitches*

As to the experience of teacher-respondents in providing learners support, technical problems and glitches were also encountered. In fact, Teacher C attested that,

"It is actually difficult to facilitate instruction in an online class especially when there is a slow, unstable, and poor internet signal and connection"

c. *Skill Difficulty*

The teacher-respondents also shared their experiences and problems on having poor knowledge in using the teaching-learning platforms like the IFSU-Learning Management System, Google Classroom, Facebook Groups and Chats, Google Forms and among others. As stated by Teacher D,

"I find difficulty in using the IFSU-LMS and other learning platforms. I do not know how to upload learning modules because of many features and details configured in the system. I cannot easily locate and access the submitted and attached outputs of students in the LMS and in Google Classroom"

d. *Lack of Instructional Support*

As to instructional support to learners, teacher-respondents revealed that the College of Education is lagging in terms of providing adequate instructional

materials in facilitating teaching-learning process. This is confirmed by Teacher E on which he stated that,

"There is no instructional support and learning resources provided for teachers. In the same manner, there is no alternative plan of action for non-laboratory performance activities in my course-subject"

e.   *No standardized template used in designing Learning Modules*

The teacher-respondents also shared their experience that as they embrace and adopt flexible-blended mode of teaching and learning, they are mandated to design and produce learning modules for students. However, there is no prescribed standardized template to be used in making learning modules, which in effect, teachers do not necessarily know if they are at the right track in developing learning materials. Teacher G & Teacher H stated that,

"In designing modules, the University did not provide standardized template to be used in developing and designing learning modules."

f.   *Lacks Administrative Support*

Also, Teacher F attested that,

"To be honest, we really want to learn on how to develop and design learning modules that are of best quality, effective, and responsive to the learning needs of the students. The problem is, we didn't undergo series of Training-workshops on how to make learning modules to be used in a blended mode or learning. Though we had a three-day training-workshop on using the IFSU-LMS as the main teaching-learning platform, still we are not being equipped with sufficient knowledge and skill on how to use such software and learning platform"

g.   *Lacks Funding*

It is equally imperative to consider financial adequacy and funding to further support instruction, given that curriculum is a complex of details. Teacher J shared her experience in terms of funding, on which she stated that,

"There is no funding support to acquire and purchase Science laboratory apparatuses to be used in a virtual laboratory activities"

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Amidst the plight of teachers and students of the College of Education in the context of teaching-learning during the COVID-19, available support programs were provided and delivered especially to students, who by the way are the most affected by the impacts of the pandemic crisis, making it accessible to them to at least help them cope with the difficulties of their studies, stress, anxieties, and even financial burdens. This set of programs ensures the safety of the students and their well-being and stimulates their motivation to continue their studies and academic endeavors despite being paddled with related problems as brought by this pandemic crisis. The learners' support provided by the College of Education in terms of Information Support, Intake Support, Technological Support, Instructional Support, and Counselling Services Support is accessible to both faculty members and students. It is evident that with the adoption of new modalities of teaching-learning, the College of Education together with its learning and support partner providers, were able to adequately and effectively deliver system of support to students using its existing and available resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the College of Education is somehow prepared in providing support as we suddenly shift from traditional face-to-face to a flexible-blended mode of teaching and learning and as we embrace the demands of a new paradigm of instruction during this COVID-19 pandemic. Library Support systems and services were found wanting, hence not adequately delivered to cater the teaching needs of the teachers of the College of Education as they revealed and attested that there is/are insufficient resources like databases and learning portals provided for students to help them access e-books, references, and other learning materials for the purpose of instructional and academic use. This is attributed to a poor and unstable internet connectivity as well as unavailability of online public access catalog in the Campus Library. In light of providing support to students who are physically challenged, the College of Education does not necessarily provide and deliver regularly planned intervention and strategic initiatives and programs to reinforce inclusive instruction putting premium to those students with disabilities. This does not mean however that there is no available programs and measures to address the needs the of students with disabilities, but such aforementioned inclusive programs are not accessed by teacher and students primarily because records show that there are no enrolled students in the College department who are physically challenged or has disabilities. Teachers and students significantly

differ in their perspectives as they view the level of accessibility of learners support as to the domains of learner intake support and instructional support. This simply implies that even the College of Education adequately provides system of learner intake assessment, students still encounter problems in accessing services upon enrolment period, registration, and profiling and the like. This is primarily attributed to the minimal dissemination of recorded videos for orientation on the procedures of enrolment and registration as well as with the poor and unstable internet connectivity of the students. Further, though teachers are ingeniously performing their instructional tasks on which they actually use varied learning platforms to send and upload instructional materials and to deliver the lesson in general, students still find difficulty in accessing those learning materials primarily because of their remote location on which internet connectivity remains as the primary pressing problem. Despite of the favourable and satisfactory provisions of the system of learners support provided by the College of Education during the COVID-19, teachers and students still encounter problems and issues which include: poor and unstable internet connectivity, lack of administrative support, limited instructional support, financial inadequacy, skill difficulty on the use of teaching-learning platforms, limited technological resources, lack of learning resources, health risks and safety concerns, voluminous or tons of academic tasks and activities, no standardized format of instructional modules, and among others. These felt and encountered problems, if not addressed, eventually result to disruption of learning, exacerbating stress and anxiety leading to low efficacy, morale, and motivation, and ineffective instruction making teaching-learning experience functionally irrelevant, irresponsive, and not necessarily meaningful.

Thus, it is hereby recommended that the College of Education and its partner-entities as technical and learning providers must advance concrete and responsive measures to address the needs of both the faculty members and the students towards making functionally relevant and responsive amidst COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Further, the College of Education should seek educational partners and networks in providing support to students. The local government units of municipalities in the Eastern Cordillera should be tapped for assisting IFSU in distributing learning modules for those students who are residing in remote areas of the region. It is also equally important to partner with ICT education hubs to improve the ICT skills and competence of teachers as they embrace the technical dynamics and procedures in teaching in an online learning set-up. Also, meetings, orientations, and series of trainings-workshops must be undertaken to further capacitate faculty members on the dynamics of flexible-blended learning as well as in using different learning platforms in delivering lessons. Lastly, the College of Education should conceptualize and come up with a

coherent and responsive action plan and performance-based activities aligned with the flexible-blended mode of learning.

Acknowledgment

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