**Challenges Faced by Grade 12 Students in the Implementation of FlexOn Learning**

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**ABSTRACT:** Several other countries have implemented localized closures impacting millions of learners. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many students around the world had to transfer from face-to-face instruction to an online learning environment in the middle of the semester. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, grade 12 students face challenges on their situation in Flex-On learning. Therefore, this study aims to know the challenges and intervention of students in the FlexOn learning implemented by LORMA Colleges. Twenty-five (25) grade 12 students participated in answering the online survey questionnaire. Qualitative descriptive research design was utilized in this study, which helped to identify themes and subthemes through the thematization analysis. Results show that almost all the participants are not academically prepared for online learning. Such that difficulty in the subject area, academic distractions, challenges on schoolworks, beating deadlines, and academic preparedness are the challenges that they are encountering now. Despite these, the students still prepare for their online class, manage their time, motivate themselves, and do some self-learning strategies.

**Keywords:** FlexOn learning, online learning; distance learning

1. **INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background of the Study**

As indicated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the [COVID-19 pandemic](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019).These nationwide closures are impacting hundreds of millions of students. Several other countries have implemented localized closures impacting millions of additional learners (UNESCO, 2020).

The sudden occurrence of Covid-19 pandemic has affected the education of the students. Due to the public health situation, face to face classes are prohibited. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many students around the world had to transfer from face-to-face instruction to an online learning environment in the middle of the semester(Bower, 2019).

As an alternative learning for face to face they offered for various types of learning modalities. As the world continues to cope up with the health crisis the Department of Health implemented an alternative approach for the students to reach and achieve their dream. Distance learning refers to a modality where learning takes place between the teacher and the learners who are connected from each other during instruction.

 Singapore, Taiwan, Hongkong, Japan and other parts of Asian countries have already advanced their technological capabilities in terms of delivering quality instructions. Web-based learning refers to the type of learning that uses the Internet as an instructional delivery tool to carry out various learning activities. It can take the form of a pure online learning in which the curriculum and learning are implemented online without face-to-face meeting between the instructor and the students, or a hybrid in which the instructor meets the students half of the time online and half of the time in the classroom, depending on the needs and requirement of the curriculum. Web-based learning can be integrated into a curriculum that turns into a full-blown course or as a supplement to traditional courses. (Francisco C., & Barcelona M., 2020).

Although most schools remain closed for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year in the United States, some countries have started reopening schools during the novel coronavirus pandemic.Students are returning to class but things don’t look like they did before schools closed when the coronavirus began to spread around the world. Now, social distancing means students and teachers wear masks and sometimes plastic shields, and the kids sit farther apart than they did before. Countries where students are returning to classrooms include Germany and Denmark in Europe, and China, South Korea and Vietnam in Asia(Strauss V., 2020).

While home school and online learning are among the proposed solutions, access to technology and the internet, especially in remote areas, remains a challenge. In the public education system, it is not uncommon for students to lack internet connection at home or be unable to afford to “load” their phones regularly. Some do not even have computers or phones at all. As this is a reality that many schools, students, and communities will face, the DepEd proposes a combination of different learning modalities and will be using the Blended Learning approach. In-classroom study and individual study/online classroom work, or Blended Learning, will allow students to learn at their own pace under guided modules. The DepEd has launched an online study platform called DepEd Commons, accessible to both private and public schools, to help students continue their lessons. It has also developed an ALS platform in partnership with Unicef called ICT4ALS, a portal of learning resources, activity sheets, and online tutorials for ALS teachers and learners(Jorge C., 2020).

 In such unprecedented circumstances, LORMA commitment is to provide an alternative means of education in the form of flexible online learning. They recognize that there are limits to what is possible without students engaging together in a classroom and school environment but LORMA’s instructors are equipped to deliver instruction that allows students to meet the expected standards aligned with LORMA learning Principles. (LORMA, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to identify the learning challenges faced by the grade 12 Students and their coping mechanisms in dealing with those challenges. Thus, Improvement of learning techniques can pave the way of producing better learning and discipline that will contribute to the academic performance of the students. This study focused on the Grade 12 Senior High Students of LORMA Colleges, San Juan Campus, La Union.

**1.2 Theoretical Framework**

**Cognitive Load Theory**

According to Sweller (1988), Cognitive Load Theory is a theory which aims to understand how the cognitive load produced by learning tasks can impede students’ ability to process new information and to create long-term memories. This theory concerns a few factors that influence the complexity of the material to be learned and analyzed. It relates to the quantity or amount of knowledge that the working memory of a student can retain at any particular time.

**Social Cognitive Theory**

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1960). Social Cognitive Theory focuses on the influences and supports of the society. This theory indicates that the person’s past experiences influences reinforcements, expectations and expectancies, that shapes whether a person will engage in a specific behavior and why a person engages in such behavior. This theory can be applied to this study on how a student adapts to the "new normal" having been used to a previous environment being surrounded by peers to study and grow with and teachers as role models to follow, which is far different from the current environment of learning today.

**Theory of Transactional Theory**

 Moore’s Theory of Transactional Distance Michael G. Moore, in his Theory of Transactional Distance, posits that

In distance learning scenarios, separation between the teacher and students can “lead to communication gaps, a psychological space of potential misunderstandings between the behaviors of instructors and those of the learners” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 200). This theory is related to our study , Because it has a direct impact on e-learning. It explains and quantifies the learning relationship between the instructor and the student in an e-learning situation where the two are separated by a significant physical or temporal distance.

**1.3 Paradigm of the Study



1.4 Statement of Objectives**

This study is conducted to identify the challenges faced by grade 12 students of LORMA Colleges San Juan Campus.

Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Identify the challenges faced by the grade 12 students in the implementation of flex-on learning; and
2. recognize the interventions of students in dealing with flex-on learning.

**2. Methodology**

**2.1. Research Design**

In this study, the researchers used Qualitative research to determine the online preparedness of grade 12 students on the new learning modalities. The researchers used a descriptive design because it is an appropriate choice when the research aim is to identify characteristics, frequencies trends and categories (McCombes, S., 2020).

**2.2. Participant and Locale of the Study**

The participants of this study are the grade 12 students in LORMA Colleges. This study involves 25 random respondents of grade 12. Random Non-Probability Sampling is used when all elements have an equal probability of being selected. Because this sampling method gives equal probability to all elements (Turner, D., 2020).

**2.3. Data Gathering Tool and Instrument**

The tools in data gathering are online questionnaires in a form of google form which consists of questions relative to the objectives of the study. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (McLeod, S., 2018).

**2.4. Data Gathering Procedure**

The researchers asked for an approval from the director’s office for the conduct of the study. After drafting the questionnaire, the researchers administered the questionnaires through google forms. An analysis of data is applied after gathering the data needed.

**2.5 Analysis of Data** The data were analyzed through thematization, in which it involves themes extracted from the responses of the respondents of the study.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This chapter displays the analysis and presentation of the data from the employed data-gathering technique concerning the challenges faced by the grade 12 students of LORMA Colleges San Juan Campus during the implementation of FlexOn learning for school year 2020-2021. The context of these factors was also expanded such as the possible interventions the students can resort in dealing with the new mode of learning.

**3.1 CHALLENGES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEX-ON LEARNING**

**3.1.1. Difficult Subject**

Several respondents stated that science related subjects have been the most difficult to deal with online class. In particular, General Physics, General Chemistry and General Biology. Based on this, lessons that include solving equations such as math and science are the ones difficult to understand in the new mode of learning. Teachers provide course instruction in various ways such as PowerPoint presentations, posting the class discussions, etc. however despite the various ways teachers can foster student engagement, the students still find it difficult to communicate with the teacher virtually when they struggle in understanding the concepts.

The findings of this study validate with the study of Sayster and Mhakure (2020) they explained that exposing students to complex problem-solving tasks which are beyond their cognitive levels, skills and abilities can result in productive failures on the part of students. When students engage in complex problem-solving tasks, they are likely to experience productive failure unless support structures are put in place. Research has shown that exposing students to complex problem-solving without putting in place efficient support structures can result in an unproductive cognitive process. The notion of productive failure is centered on the view that students are not in position to find the solution to a mathematical problem on their own in the short term.

One of the respondents stated that “*General Physics because the lessons are full of solving and it would be better if they were discussed face-to-face”*.

**3.1.2. Academic Distractions**

Online learning can be convenient because it allows students to work at their own pace and control their own learning however they can be easily distracted by the small things at home. A situation wherein students are more exposed to distractions that affects their academic performance. Several respondents stated that, utilization of gadgets/devices such as phone, ipad, laptop, etc. is the most common distraction on online learning. These devices include applications which can pull the students attention away from the activities/tasks and diminish student’s productivity. In particular, scrolling through different social media, watching videos on YouTube/Netflix, Tiktok, playing video games and notification of messages from the phone.

Leustig (2019) stated that devices like cell phones, hand-held games, and even school-issued laptops are some of the biggest classroom distractions. Students can be easily distracted by a notification or message, taking them away from the lesson and focusing on texting a friend back or reaching that next level in their favorite game. This can be distracting for teachers as lack of eye contact from students and noises from these devices takes teachers’ attention away from what they are teaching.

Moreover, Social Media platforms are a major factor that are leading to distraction and hindrance of mind. These days students tend to lose their focus from studying and rather enjoy browsing on Social Media. All of this leads to wastage of time without learning anything from it. Most of the time, students are incapable of submitting their work in the specified time frame because they are more focused on using social media platforms (Tula’s International School, 2020).

**3.1.3. Challenges on School works/tasks**

Based on the responses from the data gathered, most of the respondents were firm on their stand on activities that are difficult to understand, and unclear instructions are identified as one of the challenges of the students in completing their school tasks.

The findings of this study is parallel to the study of Understanding Difficulties and Resulting Confusion in Learning (2018). It is stated that confusion is both widely experienced and relatively easily detected by teachers, despite the uncertainty about the exact relationship between difficulties and emotional responses in learning. Thus, student emotions, such as confusion, are relatively straightforward for experienced teachers to detect, understand and respond to in face-to-face settings with relatively small class sizes (Woolfolk and Brooks, 1983; Woolf et al., 2009; Mainhard et al., 2018).

This is pointed out by the respondent stating, *“Some activities don't have clear instructions and hard to understand”.* To sum it up, difficult activities given by the teachers can consume a lot of time which conflicts with students not submitting their output on its designated deadlines and the materials needed for the activity as stated by the respondent, *“The materials available like for example, in chemistry, sometimes we don't have the materials for the activity”.*

**3.1.4 Deadlines**

Sometimes the given deadline for the activities is doable and not doable within the given period of time. Meeting deadlines, be it for work or personal, are important for your career progression and personal development. And missing deadlines can cause a lot of unnecessary consequences (Fong,K. 2019). One of the respondents mentioned that *“Some activities have very reasonable deadlines and they're completely doable. The problem is that other activities come in 'waves' and students are likely to get demotivated from overload.”* Based on this, it represents that not everyone can deal with the deadline given.

**3.1.5 Academic Preparedness**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the students are currently studying from home during quarantine. Although the students adjusted to the new normal, they are still having difficulties in dealing with the new mode of learning. One of the adjustments made by the students is being comfortable with virtual classes, where they get to participate with the discussions and activities online.

The findings for the question “Are you academically prepared for the new mode of learning?” got the equal results. Half of the total number of the respondents answered yes and also no. With this, the students' academic preparedness depends on how they adapt to the new normal and the availability of resources needed for the new mode of learning.

This finding is in line with the study of Sunil (Kumar, 2015) which stated switching from traditional classroom and face to face instructor training to computer-based training in a virtual classroom makes the learning experience entirely different for students. Their resistance to change does not allow them to adapt to the online learning environment, whereas it takes time for them to get accustomed to Course Management Systems (CMS) and the methods of computer-based education. While passive listening and notes taking are expected in a traditional classroom, online discussions or creating a web page demand springing into action. Students with a “traditional” mindset find it difficult to adapt; however, they need to accept the new learning circumstances with an open mind and heart.

One even said *“Honestly, no. Some students like me aren’t mentally & emotionally prepared. We are used to face to face learning”.* And in comparison, another respondent stated *“Actually 80% prepared”.*

**3.2 INTERVENTIONS OF THE STUDENTS IN DEALING WITH FLEX-ON LEARNING**

**3.2.1 Preparations before Online Class**

Majority of the respondents stated that, before online learning, the students prepare themselves by doing their morning routines, getting up early in the morning to eat, to take a bath, prepare school materials, and check internet connection.

According to Heiner (2014), they found that 80% of students read the textbook on a regular basis, which is much higher than reported in previous studies. Students reported using productive strategies for completing the reading assignment and cited reading prior to class as being helpful to their learning. Student self-reports were checked against electronic logs and were found to be highly accurate.

**3.2.2 Learning Modalities**

One of the challenges faced by the students in online education is technical issues, particularly unstable connection/slow internet connection. The common strategy of these students in dealing with poor internet access is to attend classes in asynchronous mode and watch the uploaded video discussions by the teachers to catch up the missed lectures.

An analysis of The Best School (2021) also found out that these programs, materials are freely available so that students can access them when it best suits their schedule. Materials can include text-based lecture notes; self-guided, interactive learning modules; or pre-recorded lectures and podcasts. Asynchronous learning gives you the materials so that you can complete them at your convenience.

Through the data gathered, the majority of the respondents stated, “*Asynchronous is a way of other strategies that you can use”.* On the other hand, a student answered *“I will not join the synchronous discussion but I will watch the recorded discussions or the pdfs posted by the teacher later on”* In addition, *“I rewatch the recorded discussion when we already have fast internet access”.*They just rely on the recorded video discussions and do self-study when they are having problems with their connection.

**3.2.3. Motivations**Students have been facing a lot of distractions with the new mode of learning, there are days that they feel unmotivated to comply with their projects and learn new things. However, through the data gathered, most of the students answered that their motivation is their goal in life.

Dornyei (2017) argued that motivation explains why people decide to do something, how hard they are going to pursue it, and how long they are willing to sustain the activity. In order words, “motivation is what gets you going, keeps you going, and determines where you’re trying to go”
According to one respondent *“I remind myself of my goals in life. The hardship of my parents shouldn't just be wasted. My tuition is expensive!!!!”.* To sum it up, their goal is the reason why they keep on going despite the distractions.

**3.2.4 Educational Apps for Productivity**

Productivity for students (and everyone else) is practically being purposeful with our day. It is about taking control of what time we do have and optimizing it for productivity, focus and above all, balance. Through the data collected, half of the respondents claimed that they keep used educational applications to help them with their tasks. The application they used is Google, YouTube, and some editing apps like Canva to finalize their tasks easily. They also have used Google classroom and Zoom to attend online classes. Few respondents stated that they used Spotify (music app) to make them productive and motivated also for entertainment and to keep them from boredom. Some of the students indicated that they do not use any application because it makes them distracted.

Mobile touchscreens are widely recognized as accessible educational tools to enhance the cognitive and intellectual development of children as young as two. Early-childhood educators readily integrate technology in the instruction of young children, preparing them to be digital citizens. This proceeding examines the body of research performed in child-computer interaction to inform designers on best practices for developing educational tablet applications. Young children may justifiably constitute a specialist user group, so special design considerations should be applied. These guidelines were formed by examining children’s cognitive, physical, and emotional levels of development (Derek Mak, Dan Nathan-Roberts, 2017).

**3.2.5 Time- Management**

Time management can be very helpful in a student's hectic schedule. It secures that students are well prepared, organized and concentrated to arrange their daily lives and complete academic homework on time. It can bring to better success; however, this is an ability that students have to comprehend and practice. Through the data collected, the majority of the students claimed that they prioritize their schoolworks first before they do household tasks or other activities. Many of the respondents imply that they accomplish their chores between asynchronous time and some consume their time finishing chores after online classes.

The method to using time effectively to achieve maximum productivity involves managing work schedules and engaging in advance planning, organizing and implementation to achieve the organisational objectives (Sahito, Khawaja, Panhwar, Siddiqui, & Saeed, 2016)

**4.CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**4.1. Conclusions**

Based on the analysis collected, the researchers came up with the following conclusions. Most students answered that science based subjects are the most difficult subject to deal with because they are having a hard time understanding the concepts. The use of gadgets/devices are identified as the most common distractions they meet in online learning because it contains applications that can pull students attention away from activities and reduce students productivity. Based on the result, most students stated that unclear instructions and difficult activities consume a lot of time which make them not able to submit their output on its designated deadlines. Moreover, the respondents stated that the activities are sometimes doable and not doable within the given period of time. Students' academic preparedness depends on how they adapt and adjust to the new normal. Most students do their morning routines before they enter online classes and if they are having poor internet connection they go for asynchronous mode of learning. This shows that despite the challenges they face they motivate themselves by reaching their goals in life. Students stated that educational apps help them finalize their tasks easily. Furthermore, students claimed that they prioritize their school activities first before they do household chores.

**4.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion presented, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. Since the implementation of FlexOn learning is a tough challenge for the students, especially those who have a slow internet connection. The teachers should help the students plan by scaffolding major assignments. This can help to motivate the students.
2. For the students, they should do their activities and performance tasks during weekdays or after online classes in the afternoon. This is to prevent procrastinating, especially on weekends and to avoid late submissions.
3. The researchers and the LORMA faculty teachers, must work hand in hand to develop learning strategies that could help every student overcome the difficulties and improve their academic performance on FlexOn learning.
4. For the future researchers, to further perform in depth analysis about the /and interventions of teachers in dealing with FlexOn learning in other schools.
5. Undertake an online interview to have more detailed respondent’s experiences on FlexOn learning and to lessen the communication barriers.
6. For the school, to finalize the learning modality thus, produce a better learning and discipline in the next implementation of FlexOn learning for the next school year.

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