



# Competing Perspectives of NLPSC Graduates on Blended Learning as a Modality Using UNESCO's Framework on Education Quality

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**Abstract.** This study is focused on the perspectives of NLPSC graduates on Blended Learning modality guided by the UNESCO's Framework on Education Quality. It is qualitative by nature and made use of case study as the research design. Interview was used as the instrument to gather plausible data. Coding, thematic analysis and bracketing were utilized to treat the data gathered. As a result, five themes emerged; 1) Learner's Characteristics 2) Contexts 3) Enabling Inputs 4) Teaching and Learning and 5) Outcomes. It was found out that learners are able to study using blended learning as a modality. However, the quality of instruction is way better during the face to face instruction. Students faced challenges relative to internet connections and load availability. Also, they have difficulty in comprehending concepts as a result of typographical errors in the modules. Moreover, some instructors and students are unfamiliar to different digital educational platforms used in the teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, students overcome these challenges through life-long values including flexibility and self-motivation and by maintaining a healthy well-being and having a supportive family and peers. It is recommended that instructors shall integrate various pedagogies considering students' individual differences to enhance and develop independence, telecommunication companies need to find ways on how to establish a strong internet connection to these municipalities, instructors must attend trainings on ICT in education, modules must be well evaluated, instructors should attend trainings and workshops on module writing and instructors should continue integrating value and life skills in the teaching and learning process.

**Keywords:** Blended Learning, Education Quality, UNESCO

## 1 Introduction

In 2020, the world almost stops due to the existence of the CoVid-19 pandemic. Truly, the pandemic is one of the biggest challenges that impact the whole world especially in the field of education. Students became extremely challenged and many suffered due to non-conventional types of learning that were introduced.

One of the various modalities that were used in the delivery of instruction in the new normal system of education is the Blended Learning. Blended learning is a method of teaching that integrates technology and digital media with traditional instructor-led

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classroom activities, giving students more flexibility to customize their learning experiences (<https://rb.gy/nr3ufz>).

According to Tera (2019), Blended Learning is a system where students receive instruction from a teacher in a physical classroom and via online courses. For an instance, learners could take a course in local university, watch a video lecture on the subject, then complete the related assignments and other requirements at their own pace. Moreover, the teacher sets the pace and schedule for the in-person aspect of the program, while the student usually has control over the pace, time, and direction of the online portion. Hence, blended learning as a modality of advancement saves time and money and provides better learning environment.

The use of blended learning is expanding globally. It is evident in professional development training and general classroom offerings for a number of educational programs across disciplines in global communities. It is a fast growing trend in traditional institutions in higher education and other organizations. Eventually, an Online Learning Survey revealed that blended learning was expanding globally to the growth rate 46% or higher per year. In fact, organizational facilitators and instructional faculty members at the university and college become comfortable with blended learning applications, they are usually highly motivated to explore further new and improved ways of using blended learning for instructional services or managerial training activities (Hilliard, 2015).

National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Director General, Karl Kendrick Chua projected during a Senate hearing that students' learning ability will be very limited due to the lack of face-to-face classes for a year which will result in a P11-trillion loss in productivity over the next 40 years. Nevertheless, the education sector in the country always aims for quality education. Relatively, UNESCO's framework on the variables of education quality has five dimensions: First is the Learner Characteristics that includes learner aptitude, perseverance, readiness for school, prior knowledge, and barriers to learning, and demographic variables. Second is the Context that includes public resources for education, parental support, national standards, labor market demands, socio-cultural and religious factors, peer effects, and time available for schooling and homework. Third, Enabling Inputs include teaching and learning materials, physical infrastructure and facilities, and human resources. Fourth, Teaching and Learning that includes learning time, teaching methods, assessment, and class size. Lastly, the Outcomes that include skills in literacy and numeracy, values, and life skills.

On March 2022, The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) stated that flexible learning will continue as a policy in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) despite the resumption of limited face-to-face classes. Therefore, college students need to comply with this flexible learning policy. However, Alvarez (2020) expressed that Blended learning in the Philippines is still considered new and young. The growing demand for blended learning possesses problems and challenges that are noteworthy to investigate, specifically in emerging higher education institutions, which hinder effective and efficient delivery of teaching and learning.

The North Luzon Philippines State College is one of the State Universities in the region which adopted similar modality in order to continue the delivery of quality education. Predictably, there are some significant challenges to blended learning models,

which teachers and students, and necessarily parents, will face, which include the expense of technology, inadequate training, technological issues, the need to adapt content for blended learning, decreased motivation, and weakened relationships between students and teachers.

Further, many students struggle in the blended learning modality especially those who reside in remote areas in the second district of Ilocos Sur. Yet, many learners from upland municipalities were able to perform well in academics and even received Latin Honors during the commencement exercises despite the challenges faced during the new system of education. Moreover, there have been researches on the effect of Blended Learning to students and studies on quality of education however, there was no study conducted on the quality of education delivered during the Blended Learning as a modality taking into account the different dimensions of education quality framed by UNESCO based on the researchers' readings.

Thus, the researchers were driven to conduct a study about the perspectives of NLPSC graduates on the quality of education using the blended modality of instruction. The result of the study will be a basis for a training-workshop for students and teachers about blended learning towards the attainment of UNESCO's framework of quality education.

## **2 Research Question**

This study aimed to present the views of NLPSC Graduates on the Quality of Instruction during the Blended Learning Modality of the college. Specifically, it sought to answer to the question:

1. What are the views of the NLPSC graduates on the quality of instruction during the blended learning modality?

## **3 Methodology**

This study aimed to present the views of NLPSC Graduates on the Quality of Instruction during the Blended Learning as a modality. In this part, the methods of research used, the population and locale, data gathering instrument and data analysis were discussed.

### **3.1 Research Design**

To better understand the views of the NLPSC Graduates, the researchers utilized Case Study as the research design. According to (Cresswell, J. et.al , 2007), case studies focus on an issue with the case concerning an individual, multiple individual , program or activity to provide insight to the issue and provide deeper understanding of it. Relatively, the researchers opted to use this design in order to describe the views of NLPSC graduates in utilizing blended learning as a modality through the detailed description

of their experiences. Moreover, it will be intrinsic by nature because the case presents a unique situation.

### **3.2 Population and Locale**

Participants for the study were chosen using a purposeful homogeneous sampling. According to Patton (2002), researchers use this type of sampling to describe in depth and specific subgroup. To identify that subgroup as respondents of the study, the researchers set the following criteria: a) a graduate of NLPSC during the Academic Year 2021-2022, b) a graduate with Latin honors c) a resident of Gregorio del Pilar, Sigay and San Emilio and d) must be willing to be interviewed. Since there were no students graduated with Latin Honors from Sigay and San Emilio, the researchers considered Lidlida as locale. As a result, three (3) student-participants were chosen.

Further, the study was conducted in the mentioned municipalities where these respondents reside.

### **3.3 Instrument**

The vehicle used by the researcher to gather relevant and accurate data was interview. Interviews will be unstructured and will be conducted face-to-face for the graduate-respondents to attend. According to Fontana and Frey(nd) as cited on the study of Acosta I. and Acosta J. (2017) described interview as one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings. The interview to be conducted will consist of key questions that will help identify the areas to be explored but will also allow the researchers and the participants to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in detail. Follow up questions will be based on the responses of the participants like describing and elucidating further their views and experiences. Finally, the interview will be recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis.

### **3.4 Treatment of Data**

After the interview, recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and was thematically interpreted and analyzed through coding.

Coding was used in developing clusters of meaning from the statements and quotes of the participants in order to create themes. Moreover, it will be used to reduce and organize data relevant for analysis. According to Cope (2010), coding is in many ways a recursive juggling act of starting with initial codes that come from the research questions, background literature, and categories inherent in the project and progressing through codes that are more interpretive as patterns, relationships, and differences arise. After coding, the researcher chose essential themes for the study based on the similarities on the views of the respondents. The researcher will expand through textual description the different themes based on the transcribed conversations using their own statements. Lastly, the researchers will exercise bracketing, a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process.

In this particular study, the researchers will serve as an interpreter, who seeks to understand and describe the views of the graduates.

## 4 Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the research findings of the data collected from the study samples. Data gathered from the three (3) participants were treated using coding, bracketing and were organized into themes. Apparently, five themes emerged; 1) Learners' Characteristics 2) Context 3) Enabling Inputs 4) Teaching and Learning and 5) outcomes.

### 4.1 Learners' Characteristics

This theme describes learners' ability and perseverance. In other words, these are students' learning experiences as influenced by personal, social, cognitive and academic elements.

Student-participant 1 stated that:

"Volunteering to help the community during these times were my coping mechanism. It was helpful to overcome stress and frustrations as I continue to adapt in the new learning system."

It is implicit that student participant 1 exercises volunteerism in order to cope with the new learning system. It has been observed that academic learning during the pandemic is really a big challenge since students are used to the traditional learning which is the face-to-face. It was found out that those who volunteers experienced multiple physical and emotional benefits from participating in a volunteer even including increase self-efficacy and self-esteem and decrease rates of anxiety and depression and increase physical activity. Further, social connectedness and positive health benefits was found out as result of volunteerism, (Cliff, 2020).

Moreover, participant 2 asserted:

*"There were those times that I felt unmotivated to study and review because of the feeling that I myself was also my instructor."*

Student-participant 2 exemplifies Independent Learning. This characteristic is indeed significant in blended learning. According to Livingston (2012), independent learning is a method or a learning process where learners have ownership and control of their learning – they learn by their own actions and direct, regulate and assess their own learning. In NLPSC, modules are used as learning materials during the pandemic. Most of the time, students need to read the lessons and learn on their own. They need to set their goals, make choices and decisions to meet learning needs and carry out the learning process towards learning outcomes. Hence, students need to be independent and flexible since they study at their most convenient time because the modality is self-paced by nature.

Nevertheless, despite the challenges, student-participant 3 confidently emphasized the importance of being motivated and challenged. This is glaring on his statement:

*“I challenge myself to study harder and focus to my goals without being affected...”*

Being challenged and motivated during the blended learning modality requires courage and effort. During the pandemic, students showed lack of motivation and low self-esteem as a result of being isolated to study only inside their homes and sometimes through online classes. This is evident on the study of the National Association of Student Financial and Administrators which stated that 76% of all undergraduates surveyed identified the lack of motivation for online learning as the biggest obstacle and 56% of graduates and professional students felt the same way. Moreover, it was noted that lack of motivation resulted to the inability to effectively learn in an online format and distracting home environment or the lack of access to conducive study paces and spaces.

## 4.2 Context

Quality education can also be measured by various factors including resources for education, socio-cultural, influence of peers, and time available for schooling and homework. Relative to this, the second theme focuses on the problems faced by students in order to access quality education in effect of the aforementioned factors.

Evidently, the top problem these students faced during the blended learning is the poor internet connection and unavailability of cellular loads in their respective municipalities. These are glaring as student-participant 1 said:

“Our environment is no longer conducive for online learning and the unavailability of internet connection or access to materials/modules has been our major problems during the pandemic.”

It is also similar to the experience of student-participant 2 which stated that:

“The poor internet connection, I cannot communicate well to my instructors and classmates and sometimes cellular load was not available all the time. “

The same scenario was experienced by student-participant 3:

“Internet connection is the top problem during blended learning modality. There were those times that I cannot communicate well to my instructors and classmates because the internet connection is poor.”

The National Center for Education Statistics stated that the increase availability of internet opportunities will enable teachers and administrators to employ the technology in many different ways including distance learning, professional development, and curriculum development and as a classroom teaching tool. However, internet connection is undeniably a problem during the blended learning modality. This conforms to a recent study of the National Research Council of the Philippines that access to the internet is a major challenge among teachers across the country amid the Covid-19 Pandemic. As a result, students experience extreme difficulty in connecting to the internet resulting to struggle in learning their lessons. Moreover, this conforms to Husniyah (2018) that students and teachers had very limited access to the internet and the blended learning planned by teachers are often unsuccessful.

### 4.3 Enabling Inputs

Learning materials are essential tools in the teaching and learning process. In the context of the implementation of blended learning, these teaching materials included modules both in print and digital form. During the pandemic online classes were implemented also to supplement the teaching- learning process. Relative to this, the third theme discusses the observations of students on the struggles of teachers in the implementation of the learning process.

Apparently, teachers struggle in the utilization of digital platform in delivering quality education. This is manifested on the statement of student-participant 1:

*“In my own experience, lessons are not delivered properly, as instructors are scrambling to go digital without much support and training.”*

Moreover, she added:

*“Some modules have typographical errors so I misunderstood some concepts.”*

Other observation came from student-participant 3 as she asserted:

*“There are no supplementary materials which are readily available since movements are still limited during that time.”*

Teachers are really doing their best to deliver quality education during the pandemic through blended learning. According to the survey of The Inverness Institute (2021), teachers have responded to the challenge of blended learning. They are giving their best under difficult condition and most are working harder and spent more of their hours in preparing lessons than before. However, there are still teachers who felt that distance blended learning is a complete disaster. Moreover, during the preparation of learning modules teachers experience serious to very serious problems which pressured them. Some teachers are problematic that some modules did not undergo instructional material review. Some have difficulty in searching for references due to its insufficiency therefore, problems in module preparation arise (Nolasco, 2022).

Further, supplementary materials aid learning because it enhances students' schema on the topic discussed. However, the restrictions brought about by the pandemic impeded students to search for other learning materials which allow them to have difficulty in learning various concepts. This agrees to Lestari et.al, (2019), that there are still students who have trouble in learning because of the limited learning resources available. Moreover, Saavedra (2020) reported that many children do not have a desk, books, internet connectivity and laptop at home thus leading to a crisis on poor learning.

### 4.4 Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning process is defined as the transformation process of knowledge from teachers to students through various teaching methods and assessments. Relatively, the theme focuses on the challenges faced by the students in the process of teaching vis-à-vis to learning most specifically in the delivery of instruction via online platforms.

This is evident on the statement of student-participant 1 that:

*“Some of my instructors are not digitally inclined especially in some educational platforms like using the zoom and google meet.”* Moreover she added *“Some of my classmates are not familiar in using the google form in answering activities and in taking the quizzes thus, they were not able to accomplish the given task.”*

It is glaring that some instructors and students are not digitally inclined or aware with the different online platform used in the delivery of instruction which are common at present time. It is clearly manifested that instructors and students are still living in the conventional modalities of learning.

The claim was strengthened with the perspective of student-participant 2 saying: *“Some of my teachers explained our task and activities via Facebook messenger. For me, it’s enough to just read teacher’s directions because sometimes they are vague.”*

According to Habibu (2012), the innovative use of ICT can facilitate student-centered learning. Hence, classroom teachers should use learning technologies to enhance student learning in every subject because it can engage the thinking, decision making, problem solving and reasoning behaviors of students. However, the experiences of the students seem contrary to what is expected in the utilization of ICT because teachers are not equip with the skills which are needed in an online flexible learning environment. This is a result of teachers’ lack of learning equipment tools and resources, lack of sufficient training, lack of confidence and knowledge in new technology in education and teachers reluctance to new technology as emphasized by Habibu.

As a result, with these challenges and characteristics, quality of instruction is being compromised which is implicitly claimed by participant 3 when he said:

*“The quality of instruction during face to face is way better.”*

This conforms to Nasution (2021) that face-to-face learning is the most preferred choice by students. However, Bali (2018) contradicts the idea because some students were very comfortable in online learning since it lead them to the chance of being innovative by using computer technologies. Moreover, in the context of learners in health professionals, blended learning has significantly become more effective than traditional face-to-face instruction, yielding similar or slightly improved results in terms of performance evaluations and appraisal (Blissit, 2016).

#### **4.5 Outcomes**

Outcomes are the skills in literacy and numeracy, values and life skills. However, the theme prominently focus on the values and life skills being developed by the students in effect of the challenges brought about by the modality and the pandemic as a whole. As stated by participant 1 :

*“Despite these challenges, I was able to persevere and work hard because to graduate is my goal”.* Similarly, student-participant 2 shared that *“It’s all about hard work and patience. I just push myself to go on with the new normal otherwise I will lose my career.”*



Implicitly, both participant developed the values of perseverance and hard work in order to achieve their goals. These life-long values and characters have helped them to overcome the challenges brought about by the modality and the effect of the pandemic. According to Rahiem (2020), most students are motivated by their aspirations not by a controlled motivation nor a motivated reward or a penalty that propelled them. Moreover, students managed to empower themselves thus preparing them to be more resilient and enabling them to cultivate the ability to remain optimistic and motivated to succeed and overcome life's adversities.

Further, their families play an important role in developing these values and life skills. This is evident on the statement of student-participant 3:

*"I made my family as my inspiration. I just go with the flow and give my hundred percent."*

According to Oztek (2020) lockdowns refresh family relationship during the pandemic. Students have the opportunity to reflect and learned to be patient, tolerant and emphatic. As a result, students become more motivated not only because of the bond established but also because of the love, support and understanding gained from peers and family members.

## 5 Conclusions

1. Based on the findings, it was found out that learners are able to study well using blended learning as a modality. However, the quality of instruction is way better during the face to face instruction.
2. The challenges of students during the blended learning modality are the unavailability of internet connection in their area, poor internet connect, unavailability of load, difficulty in understanding some concepts, unfamiliarity to different digital educational platforms like zoom, google meet and google forms.
3. The coping mechanisms of students in order to overcome the challenges brought about by the pandemic and the modality are community involvement, self-motivation, flexibility, healthy well-being and supportive family and peers.

## Recommendations

1. Instructors shall integrate various pedagogies considering students' individual differences to enhance and develop independence.
2. Since there is a problem on internet connectivity, telecommunication companies need to find ways on how to establish a strong internet connection to these municipalities. Moreover, micro entrepreneurs must invest in load retailing to cater the insufficient supply of load.
3. Instructors must attend trainings on ICT in Education to strengthen their knowledge and skills to various educational platforms used in flexible and blended learning.

4. Modules must also be well evaluated before it is distributed as a learning material to the students.
5. Instructors should attend trainings and workshops on Module writing to enhance their skills in module writing and preparation.
6. Instructors should continue assimilating value and life skills in the teaching and learning process.

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