

Exploring The Perspectives of Graduate Students in Blended Learning Modality in A State University in Laguna

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Abstract— The study aimed to explore the Blended Learning Modality became a way to deliver quality learning services to students amidst the pandemic. This served as an avenue of learning and teaching that was adapted by graduate studies students in one of the State Universities in Laguna. The study employed qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a phenomenological approach which was participated by eighteen (18) students in Graduate Studies taking varied course program in the State University in Laguna. Purposive sampling was utilized in the study in choosing the participants. Themes were used to acquire an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the students. Based on the participants' responses, five themes emerged: Convenience of use, Flexibility in learning, Difficulty in internet connection and lack of technological capability, and Interactive and Engaging Teaching Strategies. These themes show how versatile the blended learning modality in the teaching and learning process in Graduate Studies and it also demonstrates the liberty for students to be responsible in their tasks and maximize their time. Based on the conclusions of the study, it is recommended that the blended learning modality be adopted by institutions as a method of delivering learning to graduate studies students. Furthermore, this approach serves to encourage more individuals to continue their studies and become experts in their area of specialization. Exploring their experiences is a great aid to shed light on how to improve further the practice used by institutions, better cater to the needs, and meet the learning outcomes of the school. Retooling and upskilling instructors' capabilities in using technology is also something that can help every institution. Moreover, the results of this study will contribute to being transformative and adaptable in the changes happening in the educational system.

Keywords—Blended learning modality, Graduate Studies, Technology integration.

I. INTRODUCTION

Blended Learning Modality became a way to deliver quality learning services to students amidst the pandemic. This served as an avenue of learning and teaching that was adapted by graduate studies students in one of the State Universities in Laguna. As the pandemic subsided, the Philippine education system began the shift back to the face-to-face learning modality with consideration for general health protocols. The new normal situation provided opportunities for students from basic education up to the tertiary level to attempt to return to face-to-face modality, but this was not the case in some areas. In Laguna, graduate studies programs have adapted the blended learning modality as an avenue for learning and teaching, proving that learning must continue in any form and manner. This approach became widespread across different

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines. Regarding the blended learning modality, institutions offered this approach by integrating technology into their teaching and learning strategies. Therefore, technology has been a major contributor in reaching every student and teacher, ensuring the continuous flow of knowledge and competence.

The Commission on Higher Education dealt on the General Education Curriculum is primarily responsible for regulating the usage of Blended Learning (BL) in Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) especially CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 4, s. 2020 provide a thorough foundation for flexible and integrated learning. Blended learning modality is a way of teaching where tasks, activities, and lessons are delivered online or offline and graduate level students are taught to unleash their technological aspects. In the study of Villanueva et al., (2023) stated that the settings where blended learning may continue to develop, it was suggested that teacher professional development be informed by blended learning communities regarding pedagogies and behaviors that encourage learning community building. Higher education instructors' experiences are also the subject of research, which highlights their increasing workload and initial difficulty with digital tools. But over time, educators also saw increased adaptability and creativity in resource integration. In the Philippines, blended learning is still relatively new. However, there are issues and difficulties associated with this expanding need for blended learning that are worth looking into, particularly in newly established higher education institutions, since they impede the efficient and successful delivery of instruction (Abel, 2020). Thus, Tripolca (2023) notions that suggest positive impacts on learner autonomy and motivation, even if academic achievement differences are not always significant. This shows that implementing blended learning modality in the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) provides an innovative way in learning and teaching as to adapt to the 21st century skills.

Thus, this kind of learning modality shows an impact way of learning to some areas. However, in the study of Verde and Valero (2021) it stated that the outbreak's consequences have affected and continue to affect teaching strategies. Teachers need to know how to modify their approaches so that instruction and its quality are not adversely affected, because education methods are not immune to the epidemic eras we are currently experiencing. Challenges may occur in the

blended learning modality. This may result in learning gaps and may affect in increasing competencies and learning outcomes. As to Ando et al. (2022), the concept of distance learning or distance learning approach provides a wide range of strategies and approaches in delivering learning and teaching. In the institution, blended learning modality was implemented as a way to deliver education to graduate level using Moodle Cloud, Google classroom and different meeting conferences. More so, institution is adapting to the trends in education particularly technology-based learning and teaching.

Moreover, the three historical approaches to learning are as follows: the theories of autonomy and independence, industrialization theory, and interaction and communication theories (Dakhi et al., 2020). This approach blends traditional classroom instruction with internet instruction and can boost student interaction at any time and from any location. Growing technological integration has significantly altered the educational system and enhanced students' and instructors' digital literacy. Furthermore, McKenna et al. (2019) noted that because blended, or hybrid, courses provide students the "best of both worlds" by permitting them to interact in both in-person and virtual environments, they have frequently been hailed as the best approach to support learning. However, achieving that perfect learning environment is more challenging. This implies that teachers made efforts in reaching the learning outcomes by creating innovations and interventions to the students.

Although blended learning can incorporate the best features of each modality, it takes careful course design to successfully strike a balance and guarantee that the best mode of delivery is considered for every learning circumstance. As per Kumar et al. (2021), blended learning integrates online learning activities and supports students' meaningful learning through flexible online information and communication technology, fewer congested classrooms, and structured teaching and learning experiences. Verde and Valero (2021) stated that the outbreak's consequences have affected and continue to affect teaching strategies. Teachers need to know how to modify their approaches so that instruction and its quality are not adversely affected, because education methods are not immune to the epidemic eras we are currently experiencing. In the Philippine context, Oluyinka et al., (2025) global pandemic has impacted how students in Philippine higher education institutions learn. Instructors can take courses virtually for one group and in person for another, giving their online learning the same teaching as the in-person students using the hybrid learning modalities. Blended learning modality serves as an avenue of teaching and learning process which delves into new ways of reaching the graduate level students and achieving excellence. As the institution supports flexible learning, blended learning was offered to cater the needs of diverse learners and provide contextualized and personalized instructions.

The study aims to survey the viewpoint on the use of the blended learning modality. It intends to provide recommendations on how graduate schools can further improve the use of blended learning and acknowledge the teaching and learning strategies necessary for efficient and

effective learning outcomes. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following objectives:

1. To determine the perceptions of the use of blended learning modality.
2. To distinguish the challenges experienced by the students in the blended learning modality.
3. To explore the teaching strategies employed by the teachers in delivering instructions.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored to the Theory of Connectivism which notions on learning is the process of joining specialized information nodes in a network. As to the study of Goldie (2016) learning is the growth, development, transformation, or reinforcement of the sets of connections between entities that make up knowledge. This also highlights the ability to learn more and provides justification for using social media, learning management systems (LMS), and open educational resources (OERs) to create and navigate knowledge networks. Additionally, the study was anchored to the Theory of Constructivism, which provides graduate studies students with the leeway to construct their own ideas and unlock their capabilities in using technology for their learning and teaching. In the study of Taber (2015) knowledge is created rather than found when interpreting new information, learners draw on their past knowledge, experiences, and cultural background.

The study aims to explore the perceptions, challenges, and teachers' strategies when using the blended learning modality. It also aims to grasp an understanding of the experiences of the participants in the blended learning modality. Amidst the pandemic, students and Higher Education Institutions offered various learning modalities that would ensure the continuity of learning for every student aspiring to excel in their field, particularly the continuity of learning amidst the pandemic.

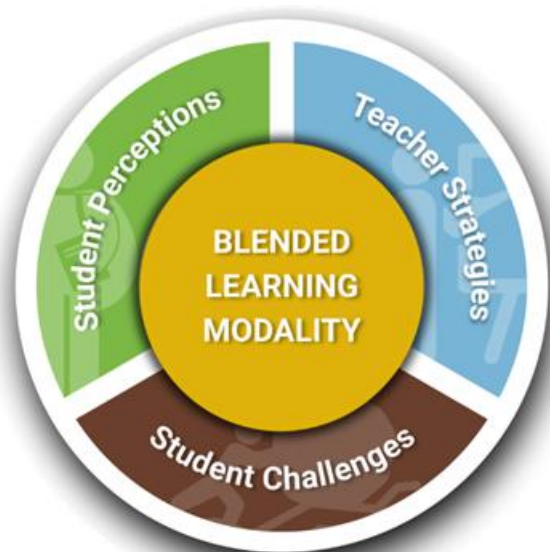


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a phenomenological approach. Consistent with the study by Williams (2021), the phenomenological approach was used to understand the phenomenon as experienced by the participants fully. Purposive sampling was implemented to identify the participants for the study. The chosen participants were enrolled students at Laguna State Polytechnic University (LSPU) who had a residency of at least two years at the institution. Specifically, the study included eight (8) graduate students enrolled in Masters and Doctorate Degree within the College of Teacher Education. The participants were Bonafide students and enrolled in LSPU during the 1st and 2nd semester School Year 2024-2025 and have been in the university for two (2) years as MA and PhD students.

Based on the gathered profile of the participants, there were nine (9) male and nine (9) female which shows that there were an equal number of male and female participants in the research group. Among the age of the participants, 25-29 age were younger professionals which have a largest group of participants, then, ages 30- 49 have a moderate representation of participants, and one (1) participant have an age of 50. The average age indicates that most of the participants are professionals in their early to mid-careers who are seeking postgraduate degrees. In terms of their course/ program, there were equal participants pursuing the highest degree, focused on Educational Leadership and Management.

Regarding data collection, the researchers seek permission to conduct the study. Moreover, researchers first provided the participants with an Informed Consent Form before gathering data. This ensured the participants were aware of the study's objectives, understood that their participation was voluntary, and confirmed their willingness to answer the questions. The interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, which were maintained throughout the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Blended learning modality presents an interesting approach to the teaching and learning process. It is a method that allows the continuous provision of knowledge and the shaping of every student's intellect. Based on their experiences, the researchers observed and experienced this through understanding the participants' perceptions, the challenges they faced, and the teaching strategies utilized within the blended learning modality. The use of technological resources improves the learning of graduate level students where interactive simulations, online collaborative documents and video-based learning.

1. Students Perceptions in Blended Learning Modality

The convenience theme highlights how, particularly at the graduate level, where the majority of students are working professionally, technology makes the entire academic process easier and more manageable for students. As students perceived in the blended learning modality, *the convenience of the use of technology and flexibility in learning* were the themes that emerged in the study. Blended learning modality is an approach used with the integration of technology. It involves synchronous and asynchronous learning, where students are guided using available materials with the integration of technology, as well as engaging in self-paced learning.

1.1 Convenience of the Use of Technology

Teachers and students were able to adapt to this approach during the pandemic era, where technology was embraced and independent learning was deepened. As shared by P1: *"Blended learning modality is a way to continue studying. Through online platforms and programs, we were able to access learning without needing to go to school for everyone's safety."* Added to this is the perception from P2: *"Blended learning modality is better to use because there is less travel time. I can do the tasks with the convenience of my time and ease."* Moreover, P3 shared: *"This approach is a modern method in the Philippine setup; this means we are evolving and adapting to the new way of learning and teaching."* This was similar to what was shared by P5: *"Using technology is an easy way for me because there is no travel time, and you consider your safety. That is why I am in favor of this modality. At the same time, I can learn even inside the home, which teaches me to be responsible and disciplined with time."* Also, P18 shared *"Attending class in blended learning*

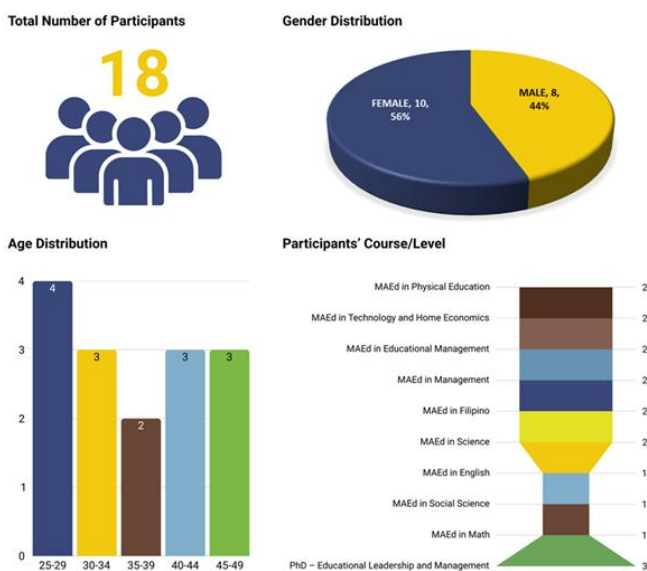


Figure 2. Research Participants' Profile

The study gathered data using an interview conducted via an online platform. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the interview guide was validated by subject-matter experts which include the perceptions, challenges and teaching strategies used in blended learning modality. For data analysis, themes and codes were utilized, and an intercoder was assigned to identify and confirm the study's themes.

approach is a convenient way of learning, I can maximize my time and able to do the task independently.”

This implies that Graduate Studies students are in favor of the blended learning modality because it offers the convenience of use and flexibility in learning. The majority of them see this approach as easy to use and convenient in their way of learning, as they can use their time wisely and also protect themselves. As Atwa et al. (2022) noted, after traditional educational systems were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions were obliged to develop online methods in order to maintain continuity of instruction across all academic disciplines. As to Obispo et al., (2023) in the Philippines, the trend of switching back to in-person instruction from online, virtual, distant learning, and other learning modalities during the epidemic has begun. Degamon and Montaje (2025) unreliable internet connectivity in online classes, and technology-related challenges in online learning which can have a starting point for curriculum evaluation in higher education initiatives and blended learning might be a viable strategy for providing high-quality education. As to Montilla et al., (2024) demonstrated that in every identified area of blended learning, students' verbal descriptions of their level of satisfaction were more than satisfied. In order to better understand the components of student satisfaction and raise the bar for blended learning courses, future research may be done to identify the reasons why students were equally satisfied in five areas. Similarly, Cruz et al., (2023) Changes in education, particularly with blended learning, have made college more challenging and instructors to maintain pupils' interest. The physical, social, and technological environments are the three primary dimensions of learning space. Within the ever-changing world of education today, conventional methods of instruction have been replaced with creative ones.

1.2 Flexibility in Learning

Teachers and students' experiences with online and in-person instruction, as well as their preferred method of learning following the pandemic. study by Gaffas (2023) found that students in the virtual group demonstrated a markedly higher level of proficiency with the Learning Management System (LMS) and reported that it was simple to use. Furthermore, compared to their peers in the blended group, they showed greater enthusiasm for working collaboratively in small groups. These findings align with the participants' direct comments on flexibility, as P11 shared: “The blended learning modality offers a versatile way of learning. It is flexible in the sense that you control your time, and you can use a laptop or devices that are easy to carry and use.” Moreover, P14 added: “Using the blended learning modality is flexible in terms of learning and studying through the use of Google Classroom, Zoom, and Google Meet.” Moreover, P18 shared: “As a student, I can pause, rewind, and re-watch complex lectures or review materials multiple times until the concept is mastered.” Also, P14 shared “The blended learning modality is a way that provides flexibility in learning in the sense of offering accessibility. This was also shared by P17: “Blended learning can involve an online approach or asynchronous sessions, which is good for us

because our homes are far from the school. We can manage both our work and our studies simultaneously.” The main advantage of blended learning is flexibility, which directly addresses graduate studies in time restrictions.

In the study of Muller et al., (2023) flexible learning, which is frequently implemented using online technologies in a blended learning design, satisfies students' demands for greater autonomy and flexibility in directing their learning experience. Higher education institutions are increasingly thinking about giving more blended learning and substituting classroom time, however there is currently little research on its efficacy and changing design elements. Moreover, Cronje (2022) as to blended learning modality even from the same event, what one person learns may differ from what another learns because construction is a unique process. Bozkurt and Sharma (2022) stakeholders in the educational process should expect flexibility from blended learning, which has become a popular strategy for connecting onsite and online learning. In order to give students, teachers, and educational institutions flexibility, this study contends that blended learning can be defined as a method that integrates onsite and online learning by balancing the advantages of one modality with the disadvantages of the other.

2. Challenges experienced by the students in the blended learning modality

Based on the responses of the students, two themes emerged: *difficulty in internet connection and lack of technological capability*. This shows how students are resilient and have an open mind toward learning. Every student experience challenges, but they take them as an opportunity to learn, grow, and adapt to the changes happening to them. These challenges may serve as a hindrance, but they are minimal in conditions to adapt and reskill the students' technological capabilities.

2.1 Difficulty in internet connection

In the study of Rochina-Chisag and Tabuena (2022), highlighting the importance of institutionalizing hybrid strategies in professional education as a mechanism that can give the educational system more breadth, increase innovation and competitiveness within the bounds of educational quality, and provide teachers with ongoing training in the use of ICTs in each training program. As shared by P7: “One of the challenges that I have encountered is the internet connection. It is difficult when we have online or synchronous classes, and my connection signal is weak.” This was also like P6: “Internet connectivity is the hard part for me, because sometimes it is raining or sometimes the reception is lost due to my locality.” Moreover, P8 shared, “One of the challenges is the lack of technological capability. It is hard for me because I am not that good with technology or tech-savvy, so I am still struggling a bit with how to use Zoom, Google Meet, and other online platforms.” As P4 shared: “I am not that good with technology, so I am not that capable of using some interactive platforms, especially Menti or online forums, but I am learning it little by little.” Furthermore, Muhria et al. (2023) over time, there have been issues with combining online and in-person learning components. Therefore, self-

regulation problems and the difficulty of mastering technology are the most significant obstacles that students encounter. This study emphasizes the necessity for more investigation to solve the issue of student blended learning.

2.2 Lack of technology capability

The participants highlighted the challenge of technical proficiency. In the study of Mulenga and Shilongo (2024) notions on the emergence of hybrid and blended learning methods, which combine the advantages of online and in-person instruction, has revolutionized educational processes. The new developments, difficulties, and potential paths for these models are examined in this review. By providing individualized learning experiences, automating tests, and developing interactive simulations, technological developments like artificial intelligence (AI), adaptive learning platforms, and virtual reality (VR) are changing how hybrid education is delivered. In hybrid learning environments, pedagogical changes that emphasize student-centered approaches and maximize active engagement such as competency-based education and flipped classrooms are increasingly essential. As shared by P2: *“One of the challenges I experienced was not being very tech-savvy or knowledgeable about some online applications and programs because, due to my age, I am not accustomed to them, but I am slowly adjusting.”* This sentiment was reinforced by P9: *“I have a lack of technological capability, especially with interactive games like Kahoot, where I don’t immediately grasp how to use them or how to answer.”* Moreover, P8 added: *“I am not very fast in using technology. Sometimes I also find it difficult to submit tasks or outputs because I don’t know how to use Google Drive or attach files to Google Classroom. However, since this is what we will be using throughout the entire course of study, I watch YouTube videos so I can learn.”*

In the study of Asio and Bayucca (2024) use blended learning have different outcomes regarding the digital competence issue. The schools were not yet prepared to introduce a distance learning program. The main issue with the reported difficulties is internet connectivity. Preparation, skills, resources, and equipment for remote learning are additional obstacles. This was strengthened by Tria (2020) The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the educational sectors and presented unique issues. Currently, every nation is putting plans and procedures into place regarding how to contain the virus, and the number of infections continues to rise.

3. Teachers’ Strategy implemented in Blended Learning Modality

Based on the responses of the participants, *Interactive and Engaging Teaching Strategies* were implemented in the blended learning modality, which shows the use of interactive online platforms and gamification. This indicates that the teachers are widening their horizons to make the lessons and discussions meaningful and engaging.

3.1 Interactive and Engaging Teaching Strategies

As to the study of Culajara et al. (2023), adopting technological capabilities and ways of delivering learning and

teaching fosters a culture of relearning and upskilling capabilities. To be future-ready and adaptable in keeping up with the trends of an ever-changing educational landscape, people must adapt to 21st-century skills in order to impart new knowledge and keep up with emerging concepts. Offering meaningful and innovative high-quality educational services is greatly aided by technology integration as shared by P1: *“The professors are providing engaging and interactive lessons and discussions using different online platforms.”* This was also similar to P4: *“Using technology provides ease and flexibility to students like me, since I am also a teacher. I can accomplish my learning tasks, maximizing my tasks and time.”* Moreover, P7 shared, *“The instructors also used gamification in delivering an interactive approach to the students, and this may result in improved learning outcomes.”* Additionally, P13 shared *“blended learning modality offers an engaging and interactive learning and teaching by using online platforms and applications.”* As to the study of Conde et al., (2024) student-directed multimodal learning experience offered by the Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) learning delivery maximizes students' involvement and the technology skills required today. To further conform with the flexible learning plan, the human resources, physical facilities, and library instructional resources for the HyFlex classes must be upgraded and re-upgraded.

The pedagogical strategies employed by professors are highly interactive. As shared by P13: *“The strategies provided by the professors are interactive; they utilize various applications or online programs that can be used to make our lessons engaging, which is new to my perspective and knowledge.”* This sentiment is strengthened by the study of Anthony et al. (2020), which asserts that technological advancements in higher education, such as blended learning (BL) which combines in-person instruction with online learning are drastically altering teaching and learning. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the theoretical underpinnings of BL studies and how BL was embraced and implemented in connection with students, lecturers, and administration as related policies grow. The goal of this current study is to gain a thorough understanding of how Physical Education instructors incorporate Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into their class plans. The focus on engaging instruction is echoed by another participant, P15: *“The instructors conduct engaging activities and meaningful discussions that demonstrate modern ways of teaching. When the session is interactive, the discussion is more exciting and livelier because we learn through a virtual setup.”* Moreover, Arrieta (2020) reveals that learning is enhanced by technology, and a range of platforms and educational resources have been created and are currently included in the curriculum.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the participants’ responses, five central themes emerged from the study: *Convenience of Use, Flexibility in Learning, Difficulty in Internet Connection, Lack of Technological Capability, and Interactive and Engaging Teaching Strategies.* These themes demonstrate the versatility

of the blended learning modality in the teaching and learning process within Graduate Studies. This approach also underscores the autonomy granted to students, enabling them to be responsible for their tasks and maximize their time. Regarding participant perceptions, the findings of the study reveal that the blended learning modality is perceived as offering convenience of use and flexibility in learning. This suggests that modality has a positive impact on the learning process. However, participants also experienced challenges, specifically difficulty in internet connection and a lack of technological capability. While blended learning represents a modern approach to learning and a way to deliver quality services in the teaching and learning process, these challenges should be viewed as new opportunities for improvement. Moreover, despite the challenges experienced, participants highly appreciate the instructors' method of service delivery. Their teaching process was noted for being interactive and engaging, which is expected to provide an improvement in learning outcomes and facilitate the adaptation of 21st-century skills and technological capabilities."

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, it is recommended that the blended learning modality be adopted by institutions as a method of delivering learning to graduate studies students. Furthermore, this approach serves to encourage more individuals to continue their studies and become experts in their area of specialization. The integration of technology in delivering quality educational services at the graduate studies level can be further improved through the adaptation of technology-aided teaching and learning. Exploring the experiences of teachers and students is a great aid to shed light on how to improve further the practice used by institutions, better cater to the needs, and meet the learning outcomes of the school, it is recommended that the technological capabilities of teachers be further improved through the embracing of 21st-century skills. Retooling and upskilling instructors' capabilities in using technology is also something that can help every institution. Lastly, the program and technological aspects of institutions should be strengthened by offering learning resources and facilities that graduate studies students can utilize in their learning, particularly specific applications and materials. Moreover, the results of this study will contribute to being transformative and adaptable in the changes happening in the educational system.

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