

Exploring Hyflex Experiences of Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The study is exploring the experiences of teachers in the hyflex modality, where the 5 elements such as learning environment, class community, lesson design, engagement and interactivity, and assessment and feedback will be the focal discussion. It will also explore the challenges in the hyflex modality of the teachers and will make a recommendation based on the 5 elements of the modality. The participants are middle school teachers. The experiences discussed were the focus on the students, the relationship building, the design of the learning, the tools in teaching for the engagement and interactivity were varied, and assessments were delivered in various ways. The challenges primarily on the internet connectivity, technological concerns, physical set - up, students' needs, and schedule. It recommends doing capacity - building for the institution, standardization of digital platforms, and use of digital platforms for change management.

Keywords: Basic Education Teachers, Hyflex, Challenges, Educational Technology, Educational Management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Hybrid modality in education refers to a blended approach that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning methods. It offers a flexible and dynamic learning environment that leverages the benefits of both in-person and virtual learning experiences. In a hybrid modality, students engage in a combination of classroom-based activities and remote learning through digital platforms.

In a hybrid education model, students attend some classes or activities on campus while also participating in online discussions, accessing course materials, and completing assignments remotely. This approach allows for a more personalized and adaptable learning experience, accommodating diverse student needs and preferences.

Hybrid modality often utilizes various digital tools and technologies, such as learning management systems, video conferencing platforms, online collaboration tools, and multimedia resources. These tools facilitate communication, content delivery, and interaction between students and instructors, both in real-time and asynchronously.

However, implementing a successful hybrid modality requires careful planning, instructional design, and technological infrastructure. Institutions need to ensure that students have access to reliable internet connections and appropriate devices to participate effectively in remote learning components. Faculty members also need to adapt their teaching strategies and create engaging online content that complements face-to-face interactions.

Overall, hybrid modality in education offers a promising approach to harness the advantages of both traditional and online learning, fostering a more flexible, inclusive, and interactive educational experience for students.

In JRU, hybrid was branded as hyflex. It is the same concept where the two modalities are combined. There is equipment provided in each classroom to deliver the teaching in two modalities such as face - to - face and online. In a course in Microsoft Learn, there are 5 elements of hybrid or hyflex learning such as learning environment, class community, lesson design, engagement and interactivity, and assessment and feedback.

The learning environment is the decision of each educational institution to build physical and virtual interaction spaces that will enable interactions both in person and online. In a study of Raes (2022), learning environments have influenced student engagement especially in synchronous engagement.

The class community creates relationships with the students in class. It is important to the teachers and learners

to connect and have the feeling of belongingness in the classroom even if the 2 modalities are done at the same time. It is the future of education, based on the report created by Microsoft in 2020 where intentional learning relationships should be one of the key elements to succeed in the hyflex or multiple modalities.

The lesson design is important like the other elements due to its importance in the teaching and learning process. The framework that suggests effective lesson design are the backward design of Wiggins and McTighe, and UDL or Universal Design for Learning. In an article by Morin in 2023, UDL is a design that will give equal opportunity to succeed in the school.

The engagement and interactivity is an element of hyflex where the sustainability of the delivery of teaching will be tested. In the sense of teaching in a Microsoft Learn course, a variety of strategies can be used by the teachers. These strategies should include constant checking of understanding, status of well - being, and formative activity.

The assessment and feedback is done to see progress in the teaching and learning process. Its format is either formative or summative assessment. In the hyflex set - up the assessment is more vital due to the 2 modalities and its sense for the growth of the students. In the online course in Microsoft Learn, technology plays a role in delivering the assessment both formative and summative.

Understanding the experience of the teachers is important to make actions to improve the hyflex modality. The 5 elements such as learning environment, class community, lesson design, engagement and interactivity, and assessment and feedback, is a good framework for developing an action plan through a focus group discussion.

This study aims to answer the following questions

1. What are the experiences of teachers in the hyflex modality in terms of:
 - 1.1. Learning environment
 - 1.2. Class community
 - 1.3. Lesson design
 - 1.4. Engagement and interactivity
 - 1.5. Assessment and feedback
2. What are the challenges of teachers in the hyflex modality?
3. What are the action plans to improve the hyflex modality?

This study can be modeled by the framework

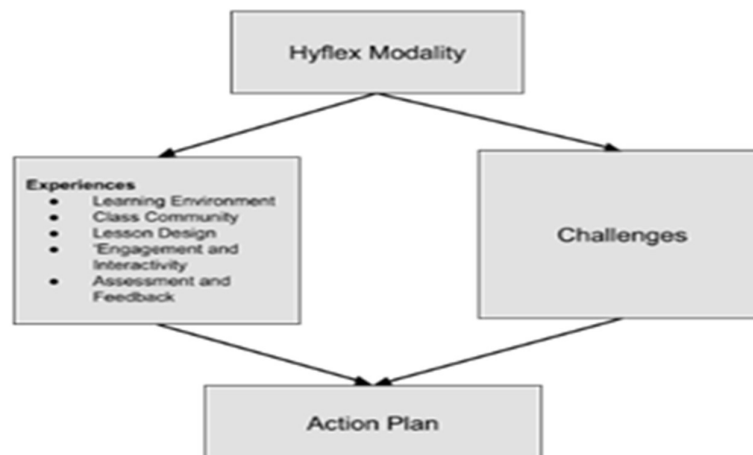


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

The focal point of the study is the hyflex modality where the variables are the experiences where the 5 elements such as learning environment, class community, lesson design, engagement and interactivity, and assessment and feedback will be discussed, and challenges will be a factor to be investigated. These variables will be utilized to create an action plan to improve the hyflex modality.

II. METHOD

This study will be qualitative where the qualities to be collected are the experiences and challenges in the hyflex

modality of the teachers. The data that will be collected via focus group discussion and document analysis (thru observation). This will be analyzed via content analysis. The output will be an action plan to improve the hyflex modality.

The participants were faculty of the Junior High School division that represents different subject areas. There were 6 participants that joined the focus group discussion. There is a variety of profiles of these participants in years of experience, and subjects taught. The selection of the participants is by invitation thru email with the permission of the division's principal. There are observers in the FGD which are 2 department chairs of the division.

The FGD was done in an order of orientation of the participants in the discussion and the content. The participants agreed in the flow of the discussion as part of the consent to be part of the data gathering for the research that is being made.

All participants actively participated in the FGD. They used the language that is comfortable to express themselves and the order of the discussion was followed. The researchers are the moderator of the FGD.

The data that was gathered thru the FGD were analyzed by the researcher through a content analysis of the experiences that were generalized by the participants. Specifically, the conventional content analysis were used in the FGD results. The analysis will focus on the positive and negative content that were shared by the participants in the FGD as interpreted by the researchers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the FGD will be presented and discussed in this part. This will follow a flow of the statement of the problem.

Learning Environment

The faculty primarily experienced a positive sense in the hyflex due to the set - up established by the institution. There were narratives saying that students are more focused, especially the F2F students. Some students prefer to use their gadgets or equipment. This is a principle followed by the institution which is the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device). On the contrary, teachers admitted that they focus more on F2F students than the students in the virtual classroom. This is also a challenge due to the connectivity where teachers provide their own data to get the seamlessness of the connection for the students online. Based on the Microsoft Learn course, the learning environment should be student - centered approach that will create physical and virtual spaces that will enable students to interact with each other in the sense of in person and online.

Class Community

In building relationships with the class, teachers have positive experience through give and take principle in the sense of workload and agreements in making tasks. There are some strategies of using games and conditioning the mind in making the subject achievable such as Math which is considered difficult. Other teachers use discussion or forum the LMS for getting to know and checking on the students well - being. Mostly, the teachers understand the students' needs by changing the character in the class that suits the grade level but most especially the needs of the students. On the other hand, internet connectivity hinders the buildup in the relationship due to the weak bandwidth the seamlessness of the interaction is affected, another concern is catering to students with special needs or the adjustment of students after being in the full online set up to the hyflex modality. In the report of Microsoft Education (Resilience and Transformation for the Future of Learning) in 2020, the education system should be more human - centered, especially now where pandemic happen, and the world is challenged by it. There should be 3 categories of new models of education such as self - management, build learning teams, and knowing people. In general, the priority of making relationships in the class is the students' well - being. It is a vital point where emotion is the gate for the motivation, cognition and attention of the students. The involvement of other stakeholders are also important such as parents, administrators, alumni, and community members.

Lesson Design

The lesson design experiences of the teachers are part of the preparation where the formulation of the syllabus were based in the DepEd Curriculum Guide and budget of days of instruction were tailored to the calendar of the institution. Learning materials were uploaded in the LMS such as videos and reading materials. The activities for both modalities were the same. Collaboration is done in a sense that groupings vary. Grouping is by modality or by mixture of modalities. On the other hand, the collaboration in lesson design was affected by the internet connectivity and the preferability of students. Using the LMS is an advantage in the success of the hyflex learning. The learning materials such as video and reading materials gave opportunities to learners to reflect and review the content. The principle "less is more" is suggested by most educational institutions that transition to hybrid learning. The backward design or UbD is a framework that can stand the challenges of

hyflex modality. The UDL where the principles of representations, action and expression, and engagement are essential to make the lesson design worthy to be utilized by the institution in the hyflex modality.

Engagement and Interactivity

The engagement and interactivity experiences of teachers are happening by using technology where there are a variety of tools and strategies with the consideration of the appropriateness in the lesson objectives. These tools are both utilized by F2F and online students. On the other hand, this engagement and interactivity, internet connectivity hinders the seamlessness. Most of the tools utilized in a classroom where there are virtual classrooms, internet connectivity is an essential. Educational tools for interactivity are web - based. The internet is a must.

Assessment and Feedback

The assessment and feedback experience of teachers is that there are a variety of assessment activities done in the classroom for formative and summative assessment. It is holistically designed from quick checks, quizzes, reflection, checklist, journals, discussion and alike using LMS. Most assessments are output - based on subjects like Business Technology and MAPEH. The use of rubrics is a must in grading the performance tasks of the students. On the other hand, the portfolio assessment is not that popularly used by the teachers as part of the assessment process. The traditional and alternative assessment can be done in the hyflex set - up. The demonstrations, performance tasks, and portfolio assessment are alternative assessments that will show growth in the learning and skills of the students. Use of the LMS for the feedback should be done as well. This will give high engagement to students. This could be done via annotation, audio recordings or video. The feedback should be given timely for students to reflect and adjust on their understanding and learning process.

Challenges in the Hyflex Modality

The challenges that teachers discussed in their hyflex teaching are internet connectivity, technological concern, classroom set - up, catering to students with special needs or behavioral concerns, and schedule of teachers.

The internet connectivity turns out to be challenging due to its bandwidth. There are times that teachers cannot connect to WiFi even though there are two available connections. There is support coming from the ITO (Information and Technology Office) however there is no solution in the connectivity issue. This resorts to the teachers using their own data for internet connection. It is an additional expense to teachers which is a disadvantage.

Technological concerns happen to the provision of equipment to the faculty. Faculty provide themselves with their own gadgets or equipment such as laptops and alike to give their teaching an avenue to be executed. However, this makes a challenge to the financial aspect, compatibility to the school set - up and maintenance of the gadgets and equipment. Some faculty get their own laptop through financial assistance by various mechanisms like the loan from the institution and financial aid from the University. Before the beginning of the school year, faculty checked their gadgets compatibility to each classroom that they will use. It was reported by the JHSPO (Junior High School Principal's Office) for the assistance needed in the compatibility of gadgets. As the school year began, challenges in the maintenance of the gadgets and equipment were needed however there are limitations in the assistance given by the ITO.

The classroom set - up plays a vital role in the execution of hyflex. The physical setting affects the teaching and learning, especially the air conditioning. Some of the narratives of the teachers were the irritation of both students and teachers if the air conditioning is not working properly. The JHSPO coordinates to the EMO (Engineering and Maintenance Office). Some of the solutions are transferring from one classroom to another and changing the air conditioning. The hyflex set - up has minimal concern in navigation and functionality however the assistance from the ITO is very efficient like for the camera, speakers, microphones, projectors, and smart TV.

Students with special needs or behavioral concerns are challenges to teachers. There are narratives that students have a hard time adjusting to the hyflex set - up. Other students have behaviors that are not prepared in the classroom activities. The submission issues are still a concern. In both modalities students have an issue in submission of schoolwork however with the help of the LMS, it can be monitored and reminded to students and parents.

The schedule of the teachers is a challenge for the hyflex due to the narratives shared. There is a challenge in setting up the equipment of each teacher and connecting to the WiFi in the classroom. In the first set - up of WiFi there are designated connections for every classroom to be utilized. It will be changed depending on the floor and the position of the router in every floor. There are a maximum of 3 classrooms connected in each router on the 1st set - up. The challenge of the faculty is mobility from one classroom to another then one connection to another. The amount of time it takes to connect to the internet takes the time for instruction and classroom activities. Their subjects have different time allocation from 30, 40, and 50 minutes. Whatever the

time, the challenge is the same for the teachers teaching in the hyflex set - up.

Action Plan

In the challenges experienced by the teachers, the recommendations are discussion on the status of the internet connection, dialogue for provision of standardized gadgets and equipment for teachers, inventory and regular checking of the classrooms, student's forum for academic preparation in different modality, and capacity building forum for teachers in teaching in the hyflex modality.

This recommendation should be guided by the 3 strategies suggested by the Microsoft Education report in 2020. Here are the strategies:

a. Collaborative capacity - building

Let the faculty or teachers be part of the decision making and development of the hyflex modality. The faculty is the frontliner in the service of teaching and learning. The capacity - building initiatives should be tried and reviewed for the improvement of the institution.

b. Standardizing Digital Platforms

The institution LMS should be given a chance to be utilized holistically. There are some features of the LMS that should be given emphasis for maximum utility and not just for the target but for its true purpose. The reports given by the LMS are examples of the features that are needed to be utilized at its maximum.

c. Use your Digital Platforms in Change Management

After the standardization, the change of management can be done. The simplest way is using the reports of the digital platforms in decision making. The LMS is not only a repository of learning materials however it is a big element to see growth and development for students and faculty.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research finds that the experiences of the teachers in the 5 elements of hyflex are as follows:

- a. In learning environment, the focus on the students is discussed however the internet connectivity turns out to be the challenge
- b. In the class community, building relationships for learning is a priority however due to the internet connectivity the seamlessness of the building relationship was disrupted.
- c. In the lesson design, the content of the teaching were on standards of DepEd Curriculum Guide however the collaboration turns out to be a challenge.
- d. In the engagement and interactivity, teachers used a variety of digital tools that are web - based however the internet connectivity hinders its seamlessness.
- e. In assessment and feedback, the teachers used a variety of assessment tools that are under LMS, however other alternative assessments like portfolio were not popular to the teachers.

The challenges experienced by the teachers are internet connectivity, technical concerns, classroom set - up, students need, and scheduling. These challenges can be managed through a dialogue to the administrators, curriculum developers and faculty.

This study recommends creating an action plan on the challenges experienced by the teachers in the hyflex set - up. These action plans are based on 3 strategies such as collaborative capacity - building, standardizing digital platforms, and use of digital platforms in change management.

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