

Acceptability Of Flexible Learning Scheme Among Essu-Maydolong Students

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ABSTRACT

Flexible learning scheme has been used by the education institutions in order to continue student's learning amidst the pandemic. For some institutions like ESSU-Maydolong, the implementation of flexible (especially those with offline modes) proves to be done for the first time since most are practicing face-to-face classes before the advent of the pandemic. Hence, a study was conducted to determine the acceptability of flexible learning scheme among the students utilizing a descriptive survey approach. Respondents of the study were students officially enrolled in 1st Semester AY 2020-2021 from different course programs and year levels. The revealed that the acceptability of flexible/offline learning scheme among ESSU-Maydolong students was "neutral." Nonetheless it showed important details on each category as well as student suggestions to help improve the said learning scheme.

Keywords: Education; Pandemic; Acceptability; Flexible Learning; Offline.

INTRODUCTION

The corona virus disease (commonly known as Covid-19) has shocked almost the entire world when it had its outbreak and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) last March 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). It has affected almost every government sector and institution (and of course the people itself) as it is an invisible enemy. The

combat against the virus has challenged every sector of every country. Economies have flunked, businesses shut down, unemployment rose, and the people were forced inside their homes (Chudik, Mohaddes, Pesaran, Raissi, & Rebucci, 2020). Schools were temporarily closed and the education of students were interrupted (Andreas, 2020) (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). No institution was exempted with the effects of the pandemic.

After several months of mandated national lockdown, education systems were forced to shift from the “usual” face-to-face (classroom) learning into alternative ones. In the Philippines, according to the Manila Times, approximately 50,000 public schools as of October 5, 2020 has opened adapting themselves to distance learning as a precaution on the spread of the corona virus (Mendoza, 2020). State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) have started their academic year earlier than the elementary and secondary schools but also followed the same scheme in the implementation of Academic Year 2020-2021. The Eastern Samar State University (ESSU) (whole institution) was able to simultaneously start the first semester of AY 2020-2021 last August 2020 using the flexible learning scheme. During the enrolment process, students were asked if they would opt for offline or online type of classes. The Maydolong Campus, a satellite campus of ESSU-Borongan (Main Campus) recorded an approximately 95% of students who preferred the offline learning. Hence, the said campus utilized handouts with learning activities and it was distributed to the students. The implementation of flexible learning (which is mostly offline in the case of (Maydolong Campus) is a different scenario from what the previous academic years had. This then encouraged the conduct of researching the acceptability of such learning scheme among the students of ESSU-Maydolong.

Objectives

Since it is the first time of the university to implement a learning scheme which is different from the face-to-face classes, this study is intended to determine and describe the acceptability of the flexible learning scheme among the students. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Identify the socio-demographic profile of the students in terms of:
 - 1.1 Sex;

- 1.2 Year Level;
- 1.3 Course Program; and
- 1.4 Residence
2. Determine the students' acceptability of flexible/offline learning scheme in terms of:
 - 2.1 Perception;
 - 2.2 Usability;
 - 2.3 Information Quality;
 - 2.4 Instructor Interaction;
 - 2.5 Usefulness; and
 - 2.6 Thoughts and Feelings
3. To know the suggestions of students in improving the flexible/learning scheme implemented by the campus.

Significance of the Study

As simple as this study may seem, it holds significance to different groups/sectors of the university as well as others outside the institution.

ESSU-Maydolong Students. They will be able to insinuate their perception, usability, information, usefulness, and other thought and feelings on the flexible/offline learning scheme as well as their take on instructor interaction. This is an avenue where they can express themselves in relation to the learning environment, they are currently in. The results of this study will also help create a better approach/implementation of flexible/offline learning for them.

Instructors. Results of this study will help the subject teachers assess the acceptance of flexible/offline learning among their students. This will further help in determining if the students are doing well with the current learning scheme and understanding the current state of the students. Ways of improving the curriculum and delivery of learning can also be taken from this study.

The University. This will serve as a basis on planning the implementation for the succeeding semester, should the higher education be not yet allowed to conduct face-to-face classes. Results may also help the university in formulating new plans to improve the existing teaching-learning strategies in an education setting where a pandemic is happening.

Guidance Counselor. The results can also be the basis for interventions and strategies that the guidance counselor of the

university can apply in order to understand the state of the students especially now that there is a call for the mental well-being of the students.

Other Education Institutions. Since all the education institutions are experiencing the covid-19 pandemic, this study will give them a glance of what is happening with the students and how acceptable they are of the learning scheme applied in this current academic year. The results might be also of their interest and can be used to validate the acceptance of flexible learning scheme among their own students.

Other Researchers. Though this may be a simple descriptive survey, results may prompt other researchers in the education field to conduct the same study in their own locale or to do a further study on the acceptability of flexible learning.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study was focused only in determining and describing the acceptability of flexible learning among currently enrolled (1st Semester AY 2020-2021) students of ESSU-Maydolong in the existence of a pandemic. The results may neither be implicative of other students in other universities nor in a normal academic year.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined according to how they are used in this study.

Acceptability – refers to how well flexible/offline learning scheme is received by ESSU-Maydolong students.

Flexible Learning – mode of learning where students are free to choose on how they will learn. In this study, most of the students opted and chose offline learning.

Offline Learning – a type of flexible learning wherein students need not to have internet connection, meet and discuss online just to achieve the learning competencies for a particular subject. For the students of ESSU-Maydolong, offline learning means distribution of module-like handouts embed with learning activities and assessments that would able them to do self-learning in any particular subject they are currently enrolled to.

Scheme – an academic plan or design that structures the content of an academic course.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive research approach was utilized in this study. It is defined as a basic research method that examines situation in accordance to its present state and includes identification of attributes with regards to a specific phenomenon based on an observational basis (Williams, 2007). In this case, the study aimed to describe the students' acceptability of flexible/offline learning scheme while the Philippine education system is under a state of pandemic.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted virtually among the students in Eastern Samar State University (ESSU) -Maydolong Campus. It is a satellite campus (of ESSU-Main) located at Brgy. Campakirit, Maydolong Eastern Samar. The current academic year, which is in line a pandemic, had approximately 1000 officially enrolled students from different places. Majority of the students' residence are within the bounds of the province of Eastern Samar while a few are from outside Eastern Samar.

Respondents

The respondents of this study are officially enrolled students during 1st Semester Academic Year 2020-2021 regardless of year level or course program they are taking. According to the table of samples provided by The Research Advisors, a study with a population size of 1000 that aims for a 95% confidence level needs at least 278 respondents. Thus, this study aimed for a 30% survey turnout (at least 300 student respondents). After the conduct of the survey, a total of 338 student respondents were able to participate which is more than the aimed survey turnout.

Instrument and Data Gathering Procedure

The research instrument was composed of two (2) parts: 1) Profile of Students; and 2) Acceptability of Flexible/Offline Learning. Part 1 sought the sex, year level, course program, and residence of the students. Part II determined the acceptability of flexible/ offline learning scheme among the students in terms of perception, usability, information quality, instructor interaction, usefulness, thoughts, and feelings. The instrument

utilized was a contextualized version of Sung Mi Song's research instrument in the study he conducted to determine the acceptance of e-learning among students in a hospitality program (Song, 2010).

After securing permission to conduct the study, the researchers conducted the survey online through the use of google docs since conducting it personally would increase the risk of the students as well as the researchers in acquiring the corona virus. To ensure the safety of everyone involved, a link was provided to the students through text message or messenger/ Facebook. Only those qualified respondents were sent with the link for the survey. To ensure that the students voluntarily agreed to answer the survey, a letter was attached at the very first portion stating that completion of the survey would serve as their consent in participating the study otherwise, they can just withdraw or discontinue filling up with the survey.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through the use of frequency counts, percentages, and weighted mean. A graphical presentation of the analysis was employed in order to have brief and concise exhibition of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Students

It is important to determine the profile of the students in order to know if the data gathered and analyzed are well represented.

Table 1. Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	159	47.00
Male	179	53.00
Total	338	100

A little over majority (53%) of the respondents were male. In terms of sex, it can be said that the data is well represented.

Table 2. Year Level

Year Level	Frequency	Percentage
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1 st Year	122	36.10
2 nd Year	112	33.10
3 rd Year	91	26.90
4 th Year	13	3.80
Total	338	100

Most of the students (36.10%) that participated in the survey were from the 1st year level while the least (3.80%) were from the 4th year. Nonetheless, it is understood to have a greater proportion among the 1st year because they have the greatest number of enrollees this semester. Moreover, the frequency count of the 4th year students is also expected since they have the least number of enrollees this year because they belong to the life-long learners who were allowed to enroll on college during the two-year transition of the K12 Program.

Table 3. Course Program

Course Program	Frequency	Percentage
BTLED	63	18.60
BPED	20	5.90
BCAED	10	3.00
BECED	55	16.30
BSED (MAPEH)	3	0.90
BSED (TLE)	2	0.60
BSHM	73	21.60
BSCRIM	112	33.10
Total	338	100

Table 3 indicates that the respondents came from the different course programs of ESSU-Maydolong. All programs are represented although they vary in percentage, but it is understandable since every program also vary in total population.

Table 4. Residence

Municipality	Frequency	Percentage
Arteche	2	0.59
Balangiga	11	3.25
Balangkayan	52	15.38
Borongan	55	16.27
Can-Avid	1	0.30

Dolores	5	1.48
Gen, MacArthur	1	0.30
Guiuan	1	0.30
Hernani	14	4.14
Llorente	62	18.34
Maydolong	113	33.43
Oras	1	0.30
Salcedo	4	1.18
Taft	3	0.89
Others	13	3.85
Total	338	100

A large number (33.4%) of student respondents are from Maydolong which is where the campus is located. A significant number also came from Balangkayan (15.38%), Llorrente (18.34%), and Hernani (4.14%) which is part of the service areas of ESSU-Maydolong. It can also be noted that 16.27% which is also a significant number of respondents are from Borongan. Most of these students are from the barangays of Borongan which is in close proximity of Maydolong. Aside from the majority coming from the four service areas of the Campus and also from Borongan, there are also students from other municipalities outside of it, although it is still under the province of Eastern Samar.

Acceptability of Flexible/Offline Learning

The descriptive rating below was used in interpreting the weighted mean of each part of the acceptability of flexible/offline learning among the students.

Range of Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating
1.0-1.5	Strongly Disagree
1.51-2.5	Disagree
2.51-3.5	Neutral
3.51-4.5	Agree
4.51-5.0	Strongly Agree

Perception

Table 5. Perception of Students

Indicators	Weighted Mean
I think flexible/offline learning is interesting.	3.22

Taking courses through flexible/offline learning is convenient.	3.12
I can save money through flexible/offline learning.	3.47
I can save time through flexible learning	3.48
Flexible/offline learning increases my productivity (i.e., spending more time on non-school-work –related activities, arrange schedule more effectively).	3.43
Flexible/offline learning scheme is compatible with the way I like to learn.	3.10
I feel confident in learning through flexible/offline learning scheme.	3.06
Flexible/offline learning is entirely within my control.	3.31
I have the resources, knowledge, and ability to use flexible/offline learning.	3.18
I prefer flexible/offline learning than face-to-face classes.	2.52
Flexible/offline learning requires more study time than face-to-face classes	2.45
Grand Mean	3.12

Table 5 shows a mean of 3.12 which indicates a neutral perception among the students with regards to the flexible/offline learning scheme of the university. This may be due to the first-time implementation of such type of learning. The students may still be weighing if such type is acceptable or if they are just bearing with it because they have no choice but to comply. However, it can be observed that the last two questions incur a bit inclining to “disagreeing” perception. Question number 11 garnered a mean of 2.52 which is under neutral but near the “disagree” perception. This means that the students are slightly inclined to non-preference of flexible/offline learning over the face-to-face class. The last sentence was recorded opposite to the initial answers of the respondents since the question is constructed in an opposite manner to the other questions. Original mean of the last statement is 3.55 which means that the students agree that the type of learning they are currently in requires more study time than face-to-face classes. This is understandable since immediate queries and concerns about certain learning topics cannot be raised right away in such a learning scheme. Hence the students would indeed spend extra time in understanding the lessons compared to when they have face-to-face class.

Usability

Table 6. Usability

Indicators	Weighted Mean
I find flexible/offline learning easy to navigate.	3.00
I find the handouts/ learning guides easy to use.	3.19
The handouts/learning materials have an attractive appearance.	3.31
The design of the handout/learning materials is appropriate for the type of learning.	3.61
The learning materials convey a sense of competency.	3.40
The learning materials creates a positive experience for me.	3.48
Grand Mean	3.33

With regards to the usability of the learning materials used in flexible/offline learning, table 6 presents a mean of 3.33 interpreted as “neutral.” Hence the students neither agree nor disagree in the usability of the learning materials in flexible/offline learning. On a side note, despite the “neutrality” of the students with regards to the usability, statement number 4 garnered an “agree” mean response from the students which indicates that the learning materials were design appropriately, at least in the view of the respondents.

Overall Usability

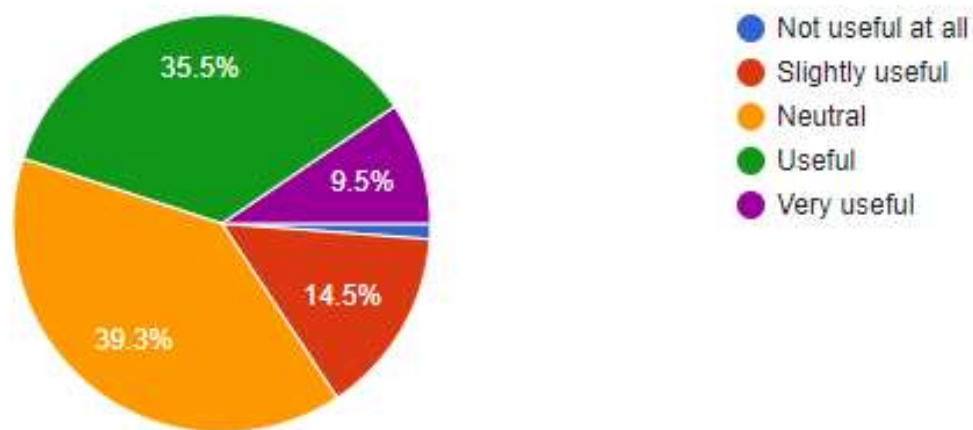


Figure 2. Overall Usability of Learning Materials

In order to cross check, the students were asked about the overall usability of the learning scheme. As indicated in the chart above, indeed majority of the students neither agree nor disagree in the usability of the learning materials used in the said learning scheme.

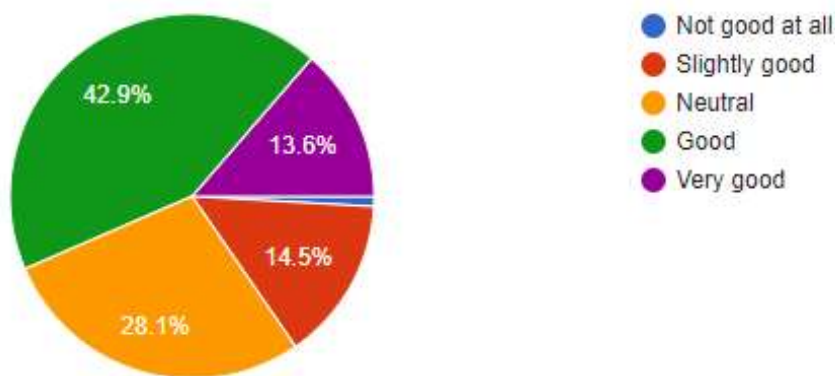
Information Quality

Table 7. Information Quality

The handouts/learning materials provides _____ information.	Weighted Mean
...accurate...	3.66
...good (supporting the course goal)...	3.77
...timely...	3.62
...relevant (enough for me to master course content)....	3.33
....easy to understand.....	3.11
....the right level of detail....	3.34
....appropriate format...	3.52
Grand Mean	3.48

Table 7 shows a 3.48 mean for the information quality of the learning materials according to the students. It is interpreted as “neutral” however it is just a few decimal points away from “agree.” Moreover, 4 out of 7 statements incurred a mean that “agrees” to the information quality of the learning materials used in flexible/offline learning. Specifically, the students agree to being accurate, good (supporting the course goal), timely, and has an appropriate format. This sheds a glimpse of light in the flexible/offline learning implementation of the institution in terms of the quality of the learning materials.

Overall Information Quality



The students were also asked to answer the overall information quality of the learning materials used and it incurred a “good” rating according to the pie chart above. This is actually in line with the average mean of the whole portion under the information quality.

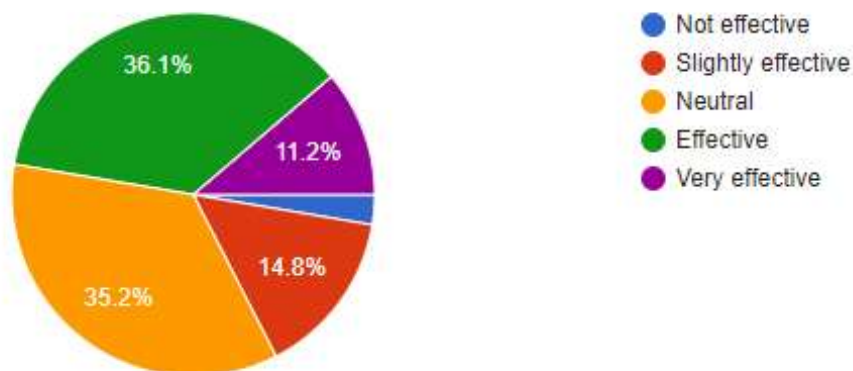
Instructor Interaction

Table 8. Instructor Interaction

"My instructor....."	Weighted Mean
...was easy to get in touch with.	3.55
....had high level of expertise in the implementation of the flexible/offline learning scheme.	3.54
....gave feedback via a variety of methods.	3.51
....supported me with regard to my learning process.	3.52
....had a low level of personal contact with us.	2.67
....frequently offered opinions to students.	3.41
....frequently followed up on the students.....	3.49
Grand Mean	3.38

In terms of instructor interaction, the students are still on "neutral" with a mean of 3.38. Nonetheless, there were 3 statements that incurred an "agreeing" mean. Table 8 shows that according to students, their instructor was "easy to get in touch with", "had a high level of expertise in the implementation of the flexible/offline learning scheme", and "supports the students with regards to learning process." Other statements except statement number 5 incurred a near "agree" score. Statement number 5 was recorder opposite to the original scores since it is also stated opposite to the tone of the other statements. The original mean for statement number 5 is 3.21 which means students are neutral in when asked if their instructors had a low level of personal contact with them.

Overall Instruction Interaction



When asked about the overall instructor interaction, the students actually had two different answers which had almost

the same percentage. Those that say that they had an effective instructor interaction composes 36.1% of the student respondents, while those that answered neutral composes 35.2%. This explains the mean having divided into “agree” and “neutral” interpretation. This kind of data indicates that some students experience an effective instructor intervention while some students (which has almost similar portion on those that say they have effective instructor intervention) indicates a neutral response. Although it is in on the minority, 2.7% of the students responded “not effective” on the instructor intervention. This is a crucial data since there may be students who really did not encounter any instructor intervention.

Usefulness

Table 9. Usefulness

“I think the experience of flexible/offline learning has helped me to....”	Weighted Mean
....develop a clearer idea of my future career plans.	3.39
....develop my skills in expressing myself verbally and in writing.	3.52
....develop skills needed to get a better job.	3.39
....improve the skills I need for my career.	3.43
....strengthen my basic skills in my course program.	3.42
....increase my overall knowledge in my respective course program.	3.41
....gain general education in my respective course program.	3.49
Flexible/Offline learning can improve my learning performance.	3.28
Flexible/Offline learning can improve my learning effectiveness.	3.29
I find flexible/online learning useful to me.	3.25
Grand Mean	3.39

Table 9 shows a mean of 3.39 which is interpreted as neutral in terms of the usefulness of experiencing flexible/offline learning. Despite being neutral, there is one statement that the students agree on this portion. Statement number 2 have a 3.59 mean which means that the students agree that their experience of flexible/offline learning developed their skills in expressing themselves verbally and in writing.

Thoughts and Feelings

Table 10. Thoughts and Feelings

	Weighted Mean
My experience with the flexible/offline learning was better than I expected.	3.10
The learning experience provided by the flexible/offline learning was better than I expected.	3.14
Overall, most of my expectations with the flexible/offline learning were confirmed.	3.29
The flexible/offline learning in our campus compares favorably to other campuses and universities.	3.35
I am generally satisfied with the quality of the flexible/offline learning in our department.	3.40
I feel I am getting my education's worth from the flexible/offline learning scheme.	3.16
Overall, the quality of flexible/offline learning offered by our department is excellent.	3.49
Overall, I am very satisfied with the flexible/offline learning scheme in our campus.	3.35
Grand Mean	3.29

The last portion in part 2 tackles on the thoughts and feelings of the students on flexible/offline learning. An overall mean of 3.29 indicates a neutral response on the thoughts and feelings of students regarding the current learning scheme of the university. While most scored a little less than the "agree" score, one statement is incurred a very near score that to "agree." Statement number 7 indicates that the overall quality of flexible/offline learning in their respective department is near excellent.

Overall Acceptability of Flexible/Offline Learning

The descriptive rating below was used in interpreting overall acceptability of flexible/offline learning among the students.

Range of Weighted Mean

1.0-1.5
1.51-2.5
2.51-3.5
3.51-4.5
4.51-5.0

Descriptive Rating

Totally Non-Acceptable
Non-Acceptable
Neutral
Acceptable
Very Acceptable

Table 11. Acceptability of Flexible/Offline Learning

Indicators	Weighted Mean
1.Perception	3.12
2.Usability	3.33
3.Information Quality	3.48
4.Instructor Interaction	3.38
5.Usefulness	3.39
6.Thoughts and Feelings	3.29
Grand Mean	3.33

The overall acceptability of flexible/offline learning scheme among ESSU-Maydolong students is “neutral” with grand mean of 3.33. The score is near acceptable though, which indicates that given time and with few improvements the said learning scheme may be found totally acceptable by the students. The proof of this is that all portions have a score of more than 3.0.

Suggestions for Improving Flexible/offline Learning

While most of the students did not write any suggestion to further improve the current flexible/offline learning scheme of the university, there are some noteworthy answers that may help or be considered by the university. They are as follows:

“Follow-up students every end of the week if we really understood the lessons well, so we may ask questions for clarification.”

“Instructor(s) should give an attention to their students’ questions regarding in the updates or any questions related their subject on their respective group chat.”

“Clearly printed so as students can easily understand it.”

“Offline learning is more difficult for us maybe face to face is better.”

“Providing long time in answering the module because we cannot easily understand the topics.”

“Improve or make the copies clearer, because of the fading words we just guessing what the word is.”

“To have a more interactive learning through the different online meetings application for us to be able to raise our

queries of a certain topic that we don't understand. It is much better if the instructor can explain and elaborate more of the topic because the problem is, what we have read on the module, is not found on the exam, though it is still about what was written on the module but the question is based on the vast understanding of the instructor. The problem is, the way I comprehend the information written on the module and the way the instructor explains it. We all have our own point of understanding and it happens that it is not the same with the instructor. I understand it the way I understand it. The question is, will the instructor accept my answer if we have different point of understanding?"

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

1. The respondents were composed of a representative distribution with regards to the following categories:
 - 1.1 Sex (47% female and 53% male);
 - 1.2 Year Level (36.10% 1st year, 33.10% 2nd year, 26.90% 3rd year, & 3.80% 4th year);
 - 1.3 Respondents came from all course programs offered in the university;
 - 1.4 Respondents reside on different municipalities within the bounds of Eastern Samar province, a significant number coming from the four service areas (Maydolong, Balangkayan, Llorente, Hernani) as well as Borongan.
2. The students have neutral perception with regards to flexible/offline learning scheme;
3. The students neither agree nor disagree in terms of the usability of flexible/offline learning scheme;
4. Statements on information quality of the learning materials incur a neutral answer from the students (although very near to "agree");
5. Instructor interaction incurred a neutral response from the students;
6. Usefulness of offline learning also beget a neutral response;
7. Thoughts and feelings of students with regards to flexible/offline learning are also neutral;
8. Overall acceptability is neutral;
9. Despite having neutral answers on all the portions of the acceptability, further details of the results (even the minor ones) explain a lot with regards to the extent of acceptability of flexible/offline learning scheme among the students of ESSU-Maydolong;

10. Results show a room for improvement in the implementation of academic year 2020-2021
11. Student suggestions in improving the flexible/offline vary but is mostly inclined to improve learning materials and time constraint in the deadline of submission of learning activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the results indicated in the study, the following are recommended by the researchers:

1. Further study (can be a case study) on the reasons why the students answered neutral on the acceptability of flexible/offline learning scheme;
2. Study that would cater the perspective of the teachers in terms of flexible/offline learning scheme;
3. Presentation of student suggestions to the faculty of the institution;
4. Discussion and intervention plan on improving the flexible/offline learning scheme for it to be fully acceptable to the students; and
5. Devising alternative ways to fully attain the learning potential of the students in times of pandemic and be included in academic policies of the university.

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