

TUITION-FREE STUDENTS' PROFILING DURING COVID-19 IN KIDAPAWAN CITY, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract. Learning effectiveness using relevant modalities to students is necessary. Many tuition-free institutions were experiencing cons amidst the transition of new normal education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The present study sought to identify the learning delivery modality that the students wanted to utilise amidst the COVID-19 encounter. Specifically, it aimed to determine the profile of the tuition-free students; determine the common academic problems experienced by the respondents; and recognise the modality of contemporary instruction to address the problem. The gathering of data happened twice to clarify the specific responses of the respondents. The frequency count and percentage were extracted to determine the result. The result of the study revealed that the majority of the student-respondents were from Kidapawan City utilising Mobile Data and Cellphone during classes. Due to the students' lack of means for learning, they were experiencing Slow Connectivity. It was concluded that the tuition-free students were unprepared to have blended learning which they preferred Modular for contemporary instruction. Due to the prevention of spreading COVID-19, it was then recommended to better prepare blended modalities particularly online learning since it became accessible and feasible for the said institution to execute despite the abrupt transition to secure continuous education.

Keywords: *Contemporary Instruction, Online Learning, Modular, Blended Learning, Tuition-Free Students*

Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) today aspire to achieve a more productive and sustainable contemporary instruction through selecting the learning delivery modalities such as online learning, module, and distanced face-to-face class, however, anywhere in the country have experienced difficulties on the new normal education.

Contemporary class, due to COVID-19, is a new normal way to advance education towards innovative and creative advancement. The majority of the students were struggling in coping classes amidst the pandemic and various calamities encountered. Thus, the present study determined the profiling of the students that could be of help in addressing their need to attain continuous education, and to maintain quality and relevant instruction in achieving educational goals.

In light of this study, the results could be used as a pertinent document in augmenting innovative learning styles for sustainable development across functions and services of all tuition-free institutions particularly in Mindanao, Philippines.

Literature Review

Education amidst the Pandemic

The Department of Science and Technology declared that the Philippines' Digital Readiness ranked 83rd among 138 countries from being technologically advanced. Aida Yuvienco, DepEd's ICT Service Director, stated that public schools or the tuition-free institutions in the Philippines rated 26 percent relative to an internet connection, and she pronounced that there are nearly 5000 schools without access to electricity in remote areas (Basu, September 2020).

The present pandemic has changed how students are being educated in a long term. With the COVID-19 spreading all over the world, it has been swift to mitigate the improvement of every institution. According to Tam and El-Azar (2020), the OECD ranged over 421 young ones affected because of the closure implemented among 39 countries. Due to the risky disposition encountered, students tend to have the temporary home-school which causes a degree of inconvenience due to varied factors. The education transformation has led to learning digitation or innovation. This brought global change compared to the conventional approach to teaching, the outmoded classrooms. Other countries like China and Nigeria, both have been using digitation in learning. Education becomes dependent on the quality of online instruction. Tam and El-Azar (2020) stated that 60 percent of the world's populace is online. In China, 120 million students access education through broadcasts and television, while Nigerian schools implemented online learning tools through the use of Google Classroom where they have synchronous face-to-face video instruction for continuous learning. Due to this learning transition, countries like China, US, and Japan utilising 5G technologies to embrace learning anytime and anywhere.

However, due to the pandemic, there are 1.5 billion in 165 countries decided not to enroll for varied problems encountered particularly in coping with learning and demands of education nowadays (UNESCO, 2020). The global academic community was forced to explore the teaching and learning process in which online or distance education is included. This has become thought-provoking for both faculty and students experiencing emotional, economic, and physical problems in responsively doing their obligation to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. UNESCO is uncertain for the students who would graduate vitiated economically due to COVID-19. The current crisis is quite essential in the economic impact. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) stated that there is a possibility to shrink nearly 1% by the end of the year 2020 concerning the global economy. World Trade Organization (WTO) prospected 13% to 32% worldwide trade deterioration. Hence, HEIs have been dealing with the economic recession considering the employment reduction, delayed paying fees, inability to grant commitments to publicly fund the institutions, and the changes in student behaviour due to the modes of the degree program. Moreover, CHED pronounced the 3.2 million college students in the Philippines enrolled for the School Year 2018-2019. But, it was then announced that out of the mentioned number of students, 70% are not able to enroll this year due to COVID-19 (Romero, 2020).

Moreover, Dancel (2020) reported that parents are raging the outbreak of COVID-19 and even doubting the effectiveness of learning where 23 million students are in both private and public institutions but only 90% of the students in public institutions re-enrolled whilst private institutions plunged the number of enrollees. Such reasons behind the education constraints are the financially strapped family who loses their jobs in which they prefer to transfer their children to public institutions to cut expenses. For instance, a mother who cannot afford to send her son to a private institution with tuition amounting PHP 40,000, thus, she transferred him to a public institution where she could only spend on his computer, modules, and printouts.

Tria (2020) stated that COVID-19 has brought great challenges that affect educational sectors. Hence, collaboration was stated as most crucial at this present time to deliver quality learning amidst exceptional situations. Such new normal plans to education are the wearing of physical distancing and

face masks; reinforcing online learning platform, research for health amidst the pandemic; and health integration program. These data can help provide quality, accessible and inclusive education. Responses like community quarantine and community lockdown of many countries, teachers and students need to work and study at home which lead the students to online instruction platforms (Crawford et al., 2020) for disaster preparedness (Agbas, et al., 2017).

When it comes to modal in education, most parents preferred modular learning for the school year 2020-2021 in DepEd. President Duterte is declaring not to use face-to-face classes until 2021, which is comprised of printed and offline digital modules, radio, and TV-based instruction when the classes shall commence (Arcilla, 2020). Out of the online learning preferences, 1.4 million parents favored educational TV to be used for instruction, 900,000 parents favored radio-based instruction, and about 500,000 wanted other systems such as face-to-face classes. Similarly, Ramos (2020) entailed the hitches that students are encountering amidst the pandemic. Students would still long to utilize face to face but due to distance learning they preferred the modular, however, since equipment and supplies were rigid to provide due to the institution's crises in facing the current calamity, therefore, online learning became imperial for continuous education. This might be hard for many but adjustment to ones' learning must adhere thereof.

On the other perspective, reshaping education in the Philippines became prevalent to subside the spreading of the viruses in the community where securing learning divides like buying computers, cellphones, and connecting internet are not something the parent or students could provide since many have lost the livelihoods due to COVID-19. The reason why reshaping to teach is vital though it takes the laborious task to build an institution of the future (Handog, 2020). With this, CHED is trying to connect the institutions through providing materials, as well as a training or Bayanihan program for teachers particularly to those with specific needs such as the Last Mile Schools Program where it provides computers to make sure the communities are prepared in the present and future dispositions.

There are 27.2 million students lack basics in terms of using the internet and other school-related resources to compensate for education amidst the new normal education encountered. President Rodrigo R. Duterte declared in SONA the prohibition to return to school at least until the COVID-19 vaccine is available. However, education is not prepared to education due to lack of reliable resources particularly the use of the internet in which drop out of school is possible to help out the family to sustain their needs rather than enrolling in school. Therefore, postponement of 2021 classes was urged to be moved because of unpreparedness as protested by the health professionals, youths, teachers, and health professionals (Allego, 2020).

There are only 22% of teachers in public schools who will receive computers laptops, and the was a government plan to out 475,000 tablets and 634,000 desktop computers for the students in a public schools (Allego, 2020). Thus, many public-school students nowadays found hard to acquire better education due to scarcity or financial challenges. Moreover, the Philippine president included in his 2020 State of the Nation Address (SONA) to improve internet connectivity even if closing down the major telecommunications companies.

As online learning and instruction continue to become more prevalent in higher education, servant leaders must better understand online learning that needs to address isolation, and dissatisfaction with the methodologies to attain a positive impact on the school community in general (Ramos, 2020). J. Prospero E. de Vera III, DPA (2020), Commission on Higher Education Chairperson, mandated the opening of classes using flexible learning modes. He encouraged to transact the means of online platforms through the use of electronic mail, courier services, phone, among others. CHED responded to the dynamic impact of using online instruction in relaying a message.

Seneviratne (2020) mentioned that higher education is also threatened by the COVID-19 in the Philippines. COVID-19 views different difficulties in shifting traditional learning to online learning. This has been the starting point for the students to encounter since it gives new barriers to access because

of the lack of digital divide. Nonetheless, flexible learning enables to continue for some of the students. It was then declared by the chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Prospero de Vera, that the norm experiencing by the students is Flexible learning in which the old norms are gone, and thus every individual must adjust to the new standard. The Commissioner added that the universities can go either online or offline options. Online learning pertains to the use of digital divides while offline can be modular in learning. It was also mentioned that if the private universities stop the operation, the Philippine government should work in providing a long-term solution.

Philippine government settled for postponement during the opening of classes in public schools from August to October 2020 due to the impact of the coronavirus disease. The public health crisis intensified. Public schools took so much time in strategising and implementing programs. Meanwhile, the Higher Education Institutions adopt academic freeze instead of allowing schools to execute while on raging calamity. Uy (2020) stated that the pandemic affected education not just in the Philippines but across the world, the reason to call nationwide academic free to varied institutions in the Philippines - University of Santo Tomas, De La Salle University, Saint Louis University, University of the Philippines, Ateneo De Manila University, and Polytechnic University of the Philippines (Palatino, 2020).

In lieu of the health and well-being, every institution has different instructions related to abiding by the government protocol such as isolating to stay at home keeping distance from one another; providing contact medical provider; participating and complying contact tracers; and monitoring of symptoms when there is (Utah State University, 2021).

The Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (2020) pronounced that HEIs trying to combat Filipino Bayanihan dwindling supplies in a public health battle. Locally-made innovations shined through conquering the COVID-19 outbreak. The University of the Philippines - National Institutes of Health celebrated the COVID-19 breakthroughs. Detection Kit was hoped to satisfy the needs of the local community. Despite the current pandemic, the Philippine HEIs combated the COVID-19 by providing alternative face shields made of plastic-based. To wit, the Batangas State University, Bicol University, Capiz State University, Cebu Technological University, Negros Oriental State University (NORSU), De La Salle University, Samar State University, Southern Leyte State University (SLSU), Tarlac State University, Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology, Technological University of the Philippines, University of Mindanao, University of Southeastern Philippines, University of Santo Tomas, UP Los Banos, West Visayas State University Medical Center, University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, and Visayas State University. Moreover, such an institution that helps the threats of COVID-19 is the UPOU in implementing online courses where many matters need to be rearranged to give better education through maximising the use of the internet for the advantage of online learning (University of the Philippines, Open University, 2020).

Tuition-Free Students

Tuition-free provides education accessible for all anywhere and anytime (University of the People, 2021) particularly to students without means in education and who meet certain standards for every tuition-free institution (Online Schools Center, 2021). Tuition-free offers equal chance and federal support to economic recovery benefiting low and middle-income students at public colleges (Winograd & Lubin, 2020) such as saving and earning more to help them relieve from tuition expenses (Mercado, 2019).

Montemayor (2018) stated that J. Prospero de Vera III, Commissioner on Higher Education Chairman, implemented the Republic Act No. 10931 that orders free miscellaneous fees and free tuition in SUCs. The miscellaneous fee includes entrance, registration, library, computer, development,

handbook, athletic, admission, medical, dental, guidance, laboratory, school ID, and cultural fees. The budget offered to Free Higher Education in the Philippines is amounting to PHP16 Billion.

The CNN Philippine Staff (2020) reported of 35% budget cut due to the COVID-19 response effort to pool funds addressing the COVID-19 crisis. Several institutions lost times on the online classes VED advisory encourages institutions to employ e-learning as the alternative mode in HEIs (Magsambol, 2020). The CNN Philippine Staff (2018) listed higher education institutions with free tuition commencing 2018 such number of institutions are 10 in National Capital Region, 17 in Region I, 5 in Region II, 26 in Region III, 20 in Region IV, 8 in Region IV, 26 in Region V, 15 in Region VI, 9 in Region VII, 11 in Region VIII, 6 in Region IX, 14 in Region X, 9 in Region XI, 13 in Region XII, and 5 in Region XIII.

As stated in Philippine News Agency that free tuition and miscellaneous fees in SUCs were applauded. To cite with, the Technological University of the Philippines Visayas (TUPV) and Bacolod City College (BCC) benefited from the Republic Act which can help them not to worry about finances especially to those families having unstable jobs but still striving for the future of their children. Thus, there is no reason for the students not to continue higher education since the law is a bridge to attain a brighter tomorrow (Guadalquiver, 2019).

To cite a particular institution, the University of Southern Mindanao is one of the tuition-free educations in the Philippines. It was established in the year 1954. USM provides quality education in science and technology through research, training, academic-related activities, and advanced studies with a wide array of courses and is well-known when it comes to agricultural programs (University of Southern Mindanao, 2021).

Consequently, the present study determines the modal of instruction that the tuition-free students want to utilise amidst the COVID-19 encounter.

Methodology

The present study considered how tuition-free students coped with their lesson during this time of pandemic particularly those enrolled in free-tuition Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and to recognize the learning delivery modality that the tuition-free students want to utilise amidst the COVID-19 encounter. Hereunder are the research questions:

- RQ1: Determine the profile of the tuition-free students;
- RQ2: Identify the common academic problems experienced by the respondents; and
- RQ3: Recognise the modality of contemporary instruction to address the problem.

The researcher conducted a study to measure the reliability of the instrument. Further, expert doctors in education were requested to validate the guide questions in which 400 respondents answered the first online survey whilst 339 tuition-free students responded to the other questionnaire taken from the second survey.

In lieu of getting the results, the researcher utilised the Google Form comprised of Frequency Count and Percentage wherein the present study collating the data online.

Results and Discussion

The gathering of data happened twice to clarify the specific responses of the respondents. 400 tuition-free students answered the First Survey containing eight (8) questions, while only 339 responded to the Second Survey with one (1) question only to follow-up query on the internet service used to contemporary class amidst the pandemic.

A. First Survey

The result of the study revealed that 48.5% or 194 students were from Kidapawan City. This implies that the majority of the students in the tuition-free institution were Kindapaweño. It was followed by Other which indicated Antipas, Pres. Roxas, Mlang, and Tulunan with 21.3% or 85 students residing in such places, and Magpet with 18% or 74 students. Meanwhile, the least location responded was the Makilala North Cotabato with 13% or 52 student-respondents.

Place	Frequency Count	Percentage
Kidapawan City	194	48.5%
Makilala North Cotabato	52	13%
Magpet	74	18.5%
Other	85	21.3%

In terms of the number of users at home, 19.5% or 78 of the students answered Three (3). It was followed by Other or more than 7 users with 17% or 68 students which is closer to the responses One (1) with 16.8% or 67 students. Meanwhile, 15% or 60 of the students responded that there were only Two (2) internet users at home, 13.8% or 55 students responded Four (4), 10% or 40 of the students responded Five (5), and 5.5% or 22 of the students answered Seven (7). The least internet users appeared Six (6) with 4.5 % or 18. The data shows that most of the respondents accompanied with several people at home who are also using their internet. Internet speed depends on what kind of telecommunications used to sustain learning needs. According to Traficom (2020) that the Finnish Transport and Communication Agency, that several people sharing the connection can also be a factor to slow down or cut out connectivity. In fact, the CNN Philippines Staff (2019) pronounced that the Philippines has the heaviest internet users among all countries. It was then revealed that most Filipinos are spending a lot of time online.

No. of Internet Users	Frequency Count	Percentage
1	67	16.8%
2	60	15%
3	78	19.5
4	55	13.8
5	40	10%
6	18	4.5%
7	22	5.5%
Other	68	17%

In connection with whether they have an internet connection at home, the majority of the students with 48.8% or 195 got Yes while 46.3% or 185 of the students answered No, and 6.8% or 27 of the students responded Other. The data revealed that the students have internet due to the present need in education, however, as observed on the opposite response the students could barely use the internet due to financial problems since most of the students belong in poverty or financially challenged families. Others even working while studying to sustain their allowances for school. As interviewed by the respondents, there are some of them just borrowed phones from their neighbors to cope up and comply with their requirements. Also, some don't have internet connectivity since they are living in a far-flung area where they cannot reach a signal, the reason why modular was also implemented to still

sustain the needs of the students despite the problems encountered. According to Burke (2020), transforming teaching and learning can be done through online learning utilising the internet which springs to the lives of the students amidst pandemics. It encourages students to stay at home for continuous education.

Student having Internet Connection	Frequency Count	Percentage
Yes	195	48.8%
No	185	46.3%
Other	27	6.8%

In terms of the internet service that the respondents were using, Other rated 46% or 184 of the students. It was followed by Globe with 36% or 144 of the students, PLDT with 14.8% or 59, Smartbro with 7.5% or 30, Bayantel with 0.5% or 2, and Sky with 0.3% or 1. The data revealed that students are using other telecommunication/s apart from the services cited below. Since the majority of the students answered Other, the proponent made Second Survey for a follow-up question to determine the internet service that the students were utilising. The Internet Society (2017) mentioned that to attain quality education, the immense potential internet is one of the pillars of sustainable development education.

Internet Service	Frequency Count	Percentage
PLDT	59	14%
Sky	1	0.3%
Globe	144	36%
Smartbro	30	7.5
Bayantel	2	0.5%
Other	184	46%

In terms of the speed of the internet connection, Good was found out as the majority response with 39.3% or 157 of the students. It was followed by Fair with 34.5% or 138 of the students, and Poor with 30% or 120. Meanwhile, the least response was Very Good with 3.5% or 14 respondents. The data revealed that the respondents have good internet connectivity. But, some of them would entail the loss of signal due to blackout, low speed or logging, and numerous internet users at home. As experienced by most of the students, whenever they have the examinations or assessment they could hardly answer for an hour, and others would experience not to send examinations whenever the electricity fluctuated, or the signal turned slow. As stated by Lalu (2020) the internet in the Philippines has a gradual improvement since the lockdown commenced due to COVID -19. Great speed can be accessed depending on the internet service/telecommunication used. Moreover, Leyco (2020) mentioned that the Philippines has 13.26 Mbps behind the ASEAN average with a 3G/4G download speed.

Speed of Internet Connection	Frequency Count	Percentage
Excellent	0	0%
Very Good	14	3.5%
Good	157	39.3%
Fair	138	34.5%
Poor	120	30%

With regards to the materials used for learning, the majority of the respondents answered Cellphone with 96.4% or 324 of the students. It was followed by Pen with 69.9% or 235 of the students and paper with 68.5% or 230 of the students. Moreover, 25.6% or 86 of the respondents answered Books, 13.7% or 46 of the respondents preferred Laptop, 4.5% or 15 for Desktop, 2.7% or 9 for Tablet, and 0.3% or 1 for Webcam. The data revealed that the majority of the students are using cellphone which is undeniably seen whenever they interact with their teachers. Majority of the students would tend to ask excuses during submissions like submitting their requirements in MSWord rather than in PDF because they are only using mobile phones in learning. However, other students don't have good mobile phones in learning the reason why they ask their classmates to text or take a picture of their teachers' instruction to cope with the lessons. Amadora (2020) mentioned that distance learning requires technology to attain continuous education. Jin and Sabio (2018) mentioned that during the 21st-century students have the potential to utilise phones to access varied activities in which the mobile era can be employed in updating curricula or policy. As stated that phones have become a personal ecosystem due to portability, affordability, and sustainability particularly in education.

Materials Used for Learning	Frequency Count	Percentage
Laptop	46	13.7%
Desktop	15	4.5%
Tablet	9	2.7%
Webcam	1	0.3%
Paper	230	68%
Pen	235	69%
Books	86	25.6%
Cellphone	324	96.4%

In the context of the problems encountered by the students during this School Year utilising blended learning due to the pandemic, it was found out that the respondents have Slow connectivity with 83% or 332 students responded on this matter which was followed by Lack of resources with 59% or 236, Lack of learning devices with 57.85 or 231, Low income with 57% or 228, No internet connection with 40.5% or 162, High transportation fee going to school with 25.5% or 102, Less techno-savvy with 17% or 68, and Other with 15.3% or 61. The data shows that most of the respondents don't have good connectivity in which they are struggling to comply and cope with the lessons. The reasons could be the internet services that the majority are utilising such as the mobile data and the place where they are residing. It vividly revealed that students are not ready for online instruction since the internet is the major importance to acquire distance learning. Other was not indicated any reasons due to personal problems currently encountered. Mateo (2020) mentioned that there are millions of Filipinos

left behind in education due to COVID-19 since there is a lack of access to technology to support e-learning at home. GMA News (2020) reported that slow internet connectivity is challenging for students as well as teachers as the class starts due to coronavirus pandemic, however Education Secretary Leonor Briones declared to continue educating despite the hounding online classes.

Problems for School Year 2020-2021	Frequency Count	Percentage
Slow Connectivity	332	83%
Lack of Resources	236	59%
No Internet Connection	162	40.5%
Lack of Learning Devices	231	57.8%
High Transportation Fee Going to School	102	25.5%
Less Techno-Savvy	68	17%
Low Income	228	57%
Other	61	15.3%

In connection to the contemporary instruction in addressing the problem, Modular got the highest response with 51% or 204 of the respondents, which was followed by Distanced Face-to-Face Class with 41.3% or 165, Online Learning with 32.5% or 130, and Other which were stated to have blended learning of Online or Distance Learning and Modular with 6.8% or 27 of the respondents. As shown below, the students preferred modular amidst the pandemic, however, it is not adequate to produce modules for all of the students but only those who do not have signals are rather given priority to go through modular learning approach. According to Philstar Global (2020) that there are many institutions switching methods of relaying learning to students to augment education due to the cancellation of face-to-face classes. Moreover, students are harnessing the power of technology to deliver information in today's generation. Similarly, French (2015) mentioned that modular attempts to cater to varied students to unleash students' preference and flexibility in developing and managing their studies. Diverse scholars agreed on modular for the advantage of students' capacity and mobility that can be beneficial to universities responding to the needs of the students. But, French also elaborated the contrast effect of modularisation in which its educational experience became incoherent, and transparent to potentially weaken learning outcomes.

Contemporary Instruction Preference	Frequency Count	Percentage
Online Learning	130	32.5%
Modular	204	51%
Distanced Face-to-Face Class	165	41.3%
Other	27	6.8%

B. Second Survey

In light to the internet services that the students were using, 70.1 or 237 of the students answered Mobile Data, followed by Globe with 26% of 88, and PLDT with 15.4% or 52. For the least used internet services, SKY, Smartbro, and Bayantel got 0.6% or 2 of the students. The second conduct of the questionnaire was taken to retrieve specific responses on the other internet service that the students are using. Since the majority of the students were written cellphone, therefore, the researcher included Cellphone as a replacement to Others to determine their Frequency Count and Percentage. According to Aseanet Broadband (2020), the internet has become unavoidable in human lives. In many ways, it becomes a great platform for students to learn. Further, Kim (2020) imparted that the accessibility on the use of internet in institution could get quality education wherein students are relying on high-speed internet but there are students who missed the class due to poor internet connectivity. This clearly emphasised that students are struggling due to connectivity. Thus, many institutions globally are still adjusting and developing the abrupt transition of education due to the present pandemic.

Internet Service	Frequency Count	Percentage
PLDT	52	15.4%
Sky	2	0.6%
Globe	88	26%
Smartbro	2	0.6%
Bayantel	2	0.6%
Mobile Data	237	70.1%

Summary

There were two (2) instruments used in gathering the data – First Survey and Second Survey. The First Survey was comprised of multiple questions concerning profiling towards contemporary instruction which was taken by 400 respondents, while the Second Survey was participated by 339 respondents to determine the internet service used for learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, in light of the analysis of data, frequency count, and percentage were utilised.

The result of the study revealed that majority of the student-respondents were from Kidapawan City with 48.5% or 194 of the students. For the number of users at home, the majority of the 19.5% or 78 of the students answered Three (3). Regarding whether they have an internet connection at home, the majority of the students with 48.8% or 195 got Yes using Mobile Data with 70.1 or 237. The internet connection was found Good as the majority response with 39.3% or 157 of the students which followed by Fair with 34.5% or 138 of the student-respondents.

In connection to the materials used for learning, the majority of the respondents answered Cellphone with 96.4% or 326 of the students, encountering Slow Connectivity with 83% or 332 students responded on this matter which was followed by the other mentioned problems due to unpreparedness in having online classes. And, Modular got the highest preference with 51% or 204 of the respondents compared to the other contemporary instructions to address the problem.

Conclusion

In the tuition-free institution, the majority of the students were taking blended classes where students specifically more utilised the online instruction. The majority of the students were struggling as the data shows that they were unprepared to take the blended learning given that they were using a cellphone as device and mobile data as connectivity that learning became a problem due to the slow connectivity and lack of learning devices. Abrupt education transition is not easy to cope with. Dropouts nowadays are slowly aggregating due to financially challenged encounters among clientele. Thus, the majority of the students preferred modular to escape from utilising gadgets in learning. This has been a problem for the tuition-free institutions where thousands of students are enrolled. Therefore, tertiary learners must responsibly explore, adapt and mend on the contemporary education, providing to help those who belong to poverty or financially challenged families.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, tuition-free students were still coping in doing their requirements, studying their lessons, and collaborating with their classmates and teachers. Varied of cons were indicated amidst the abrupt change of education policy that everyone must adhere to for continuous learning. Nonetheless, advanced preparation for innovation is the key to attain great quality and relevant education.

Recommendations

The following statements are the recommendations to the present study:

1. There must be preparation for innovative education. Thus, the institution must help the students to be advanced through recognising the essence of computers and online learning applications for continuous education amidst or without the pandemic.
2. Due to the lack of gadgets particularly computers, hence, students must be equipped on using learning devices through a series of seminars and workshops.
3. Provisions of gadgets like cellphones and internet connections to students who belong to poverty or financially challenged families must be given action.
4. The institution must be transparent and flexible in foreseeing ahead the pros and cons to whatever calamities may happen in utilising multiple learning modalities - blended, distance, and modular.

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