

# Best Practices and Lessons Learned: Outshining the Challenges of this Pandemic Through the MPC Way

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## Abstract

The cornerstone of the educational system has recently been rocked by an extraordinary health crisis. It is critical to developing a sophisticated understanding of students' and teachers' online learning experiences during the COVID-19 epidemic, given the uncertainty of today. Although numerous studies have looked into this subject, more data is available regarding the difficulties and methods teachers and students use to deal with them. This research aims to fill the gap. The findings, which took a qualitative approach, showed that instructors faced a variety of types and degrees of online learning obstacles. Their biggest problem was dealing with students who were having trouble with the new learning method, while their slightest problem was dealing with a poor internet connection. The results also showed that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the caliber of students' and teachers' educational experiences. Regarding the best practices employed, Instructors actively participate in a quality learning experience and utilize an appropriate blended learning approach. The institution is doing its best to give quality education.

**Keywords:** Online learning, online learning challenges, higher education, covid 19, online learning best practices

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## 1. Introduction

Joaquin et al. (2020) described Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a global health crisis, and world meter (2022) reported as of January 20, 2022, that in the Philippines, almost 3.5 million people had infected with 53,044 deaths. Numerous facets of human existence have changed by the COVID-19 or coronavirus pandemic, and education is no exception. Because of it, it led the majority of nations to close educational institutions to stop the Coronavirus from spreading.

The epidemic compelled Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges to adopt a new alternative learning modality to the government's decision to safeguard everyone from the virus. Mariner's system advocacy is to continue the company's vision to equip students with skills that will prepare them to be professionals ready to join the corporate world using the new alternative learning modalities. However, Alvarez (2020) quoted Ocak (2011) posits that gearing towards a blended-based approach provides dynamics of teaching changes and can alter the faculty role.

The institution has begun offering online courses during the 2020-2021 academic year, using blended learning modalities to guarantee learning continuity. In this approach, students may continue their education remotely via printed modules and online digital modules. Students can choose from three flexible learning modes: 1) online, which uses available online classrooms for instruction delivery; (2) offline, which involves printed modules or digital media in storage devices; and (3) blended, which combines online and offline modes. Any of these modalities are integrated into blended learning to leverage their advantages and produce high-quality education. The process of getting ready for online learning began by ensuring accessibility, relevance, and acquisition of required technology, facilities, resources, tools, and machinery for the execution. Then came instruction and direction, instructing students on how to use various online learning tools.

Students participated in online education thru the use of Google Classroom. Online teaching can be synchronous when both the teacher and the students log in to the classes simultaneously and can communicate in real time. Live courses are accessible for every type with the use of the free software of Google Meet, where the integration of synchronous video conferencing technology is used. The duration of live lessons is 60 minutes once a week. These live lessons have been recorded and made available to the students by uploading the video to google classroom so the students may watch it whenever they want.

On the other hand, asynchronous teaching can be present simultaneously without the teacher and the students. In addition, Google Classroom contains features such as adding subjects, creating links for adding students, texting, adding files, sharing materials, sharing announcements, giving homework, and downloading. During the assessment, they uploaded reading and exams through Google classroom.

Monroy et al. (2021) stated that during the pandemic, high levels of anxiety and stress were generated in students, causing deficits in concentration, and working memory and affecting other cognitive processes associated with information processing, thus involving academic performance. Our ancestors have always emphasized the significance of education in one's life, regardless of how dreadful one's circumstances in life are.

An adage goes, "Education is the only inheritance that nobody can take away from you." It is valued highly in our nation as a way to improve one's quality of life. This adage has never been more accurate than during the COVID-19 outbreak that hit the country. Despite the pandemic's financial and physical effects, students kept up with their education.

De Vries (2021) emphasized that little framework or guidelines existed for online teaching because of its suddenness. Creating common ground in a classroom that enables open dialogue, encourages students, and creates a safe learning environment is crucial. Even while efforts by the educational community made a determined effort to keep the learning process continues during the pandemic, students had to depend increasingly on their judgment to continue.

Teachers have to adjust, innovating to relay pedagogical theories and instructional methodologies, something they might not have received training. Students in remote areas who lack access to online learning materials, lack perseverance and are engaged in independent learning run the danger of falling behind.

Students from the Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges have been involved in blended learning using the institution's learning management system; some students quickly transitioned to the new normal, but some students face many challenges. Younge (2021) insisted that a recent study shows that some students may have started the school year as much as a whole grade behind in math, while many still need more access to high-speed internet, a device, and the guidance required to use them. Some students may have experienced a slower-moving pace to adjust at first, even with the digital learning platforms set up and the resources to run them to online platforms.

Olvido et al. (2021) emphasize the gap between those with connectivity and those without widened when online learning modality is used due to the pandemic. The continuing academic engagement has challenged teachers and students due to access and internet connectivity. Technology enables teachers to connect with their students and even operate online without face-to-face interaction. It offers inventive and resilient solutions in times of crisis to counteract the disruption. The most significant barrier to teaching and learning continuity might be technological difficulties like internet access, especially for areas that need signals.

An efficient school facility adapts to the evolving educational delivery programs and, at the absolute least, should offer a physical setting that is welcoming, secure, safe, accessible, well-lit, well-ventilated, and aesthetically beautiful. Gupta (2021) clarified that this sudden shift towards online teaching and learning also necessitated the need to turn physical libraries into digital libraries for the online delivery of information services. Libraries relentlessly supported online classes by providing e-resources to students, researchers, and educators while struggling to adopt online work-from-home practices. Still, on the contrary, an article published by the World Bank Group (2020) confirmed reductions in income and the need for more lavish health spending would make it difficult for some families to cover education costs. Previous economic shocks in low-income countries have reduced revenues, lowered household education spending, and led to lower rate participation. Institutions will need help adapting their facilities when they have a low turnout of enrollees.

The most significant individuals in our society are the teachers. They offer students a reason to live, prepare them to excel as global citizens, and stoke their desire to achieve in school and life. Teachers are the critical factor in a child's readiness for the future since today's youth will be the leaders of tomorrow, but during the pandemic, they are one of the most challenged. Teachers made unprecedented modifications, such as adopting new teaching methods; these new techniques put a greater emphasis on teacher-student interaction to make the internet more welcoming. Salhab et al. (2021) penned that excellent practice in teaching is defined as an experience that positively influences and adds value to the student learning process in terms of involvement, motivation, and skills development due to its excellent service. Lapitan (2021) reiterated that Instructors must also find means to improve their interaction with students and maintain student interest and engagement during online classes.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

This paper aims to reveal the best practices the institution has implemented and how it outshined the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic period. Knowing what the institutions ran against in this circumstance might be helpful. Consequently, the following is the current research issue:

1. What are your institution's best practices in implementing alternative learning modalities?
2. What challenges did your institution encounter in implementing alternative learning modalities?

## 2. Design and Methodology

The research-based qualitative evaluation report was employed in the study. It is a qualitative approach that describes and reveals the case's themes by drawing on various information sources and in-depth data collection to comprehensively understand the situation caused by the pandemic to the community and students of Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges., The institution braved the online education process when they were quote unprepared during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The case in this study is to determine the best practices in

implementing alternative learning modalities by the institution and the challenges they have faced in implementing alternative learning modalities posed by the pandemic.

### 2.1 Population and Locale of the Study

The Mariners Polytechnic Colleges, Inc. (MPC) is located in the heart of Bicol, Naga City, and focuses mainly on business-related courses. Thirty-one (31) faculty members teach both the senior high school department and the tertiary level.

Using Slovin's formula, respondents were twenty-nine (29) faculty members involved in implementing the alternative learning modalities. Respondents were composed of an instructor, program chair, students, and dean of academics. In the study, the researcher prepared an interview form consisting of open-ended questions to collect data.

This study aimed to reveal the best practices the institution has implemented and how it outshined the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The form was sent online and answered based on voluntary principle wherein the respondents were given enough time to answer the questionnaire.

### 2.2 Data Gathering Instrument

The survey will be conducted to stakeholders of Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges using a constructed questionnaire to collect data about the demographic profile of the respondents, The institution's best practices in implementing alternative learning modalities, and the challenge Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges Inc. encountered in implementing alternative learning modalities.

Purposive sampling will be utilized in the interview of respondents from the institution. The interview guide will extract information from the respondents and will be personally collected. Part I of the questionnaire will be comprised of the demographic profiles of the respondents. Part II will deal with the best practices in implementing alternative learning modalities of Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges, and Part III will deal with the challenges Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges encountered in implementing alternative learning modalities. Research experts, advisers, and panel members will validate these instruments

## 3. Findings and Discussion

One objective of this study is to find out how COVID-19 affected Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges and its stakeholders and to identify the challenges they encountered with the implementation of their alternative learning modalities and to identify their best practices during its performance and how it helped their stakeholders cope up with the change.

Table 1. Themes and codes were revealed as a result of the analysis of the best practices in implementing Alternative learning modalities.

Theme	Number of Codes
Utilizes an appropriate blended learning approach.	1
Instructor actively takes part in a quality learning experience.	4
The institution is doing its best to give quality education.	7

In this study exploring the institution's best practices in implementing the alternative learning modalities initiated in the Covid-19 pandemic, three themes, and 12 codes were revealed as a result of the data analysis. The themes revealed concerning the challenges were: "Blended Learning," "Institution," and "Instructor."

### Best practices related to Blended Online Learning

The impacts of this epidemic may last for many months or even longer. Because blended learning more closely mimics the regular learning environment, it is more long-lasting than virtual learning alone. Blended learning is one of the institution's best practices because it engages students, enables them to take charge of their own learning, and can reach more students while also allowing them to learn at their own speed. With blended learning, lessons can continue after the school day.

In the coming days, when the institution may use F2F, we may adhere to public health regulations while still giving students the opportunity for face-to-face interaction with teachers and classmates by dividing instructional time between e-learning and traditional classroom settings.

Lapitan et al. (2021) confirmed that the blended online learning strategy is deemed to be the most practical method to adapt as this combines the advantages of synchronous and asynchronous strategies. The main motivation in choosing the blended strategy is to increase the student's participation in their own learning process rather than quietly sitting during a synchronous discussion.

Table 2. Codes and frequencies related to the blended learning theme.

Theme	Code	Frequency
Utilizes an appropriate blended learning approach.	Online classes are done by having synchronous and asynchronous sessions through the use of google classroom and google meet.	2

#### Best practices related to Instructors

Every aspect of life has been disrupted by the coronavirus and COVID-19. We must take into consideration how hard this new situation is for the teachers but despite the difficulties, they still continue to instruct our children and be considerate of the situation of their students. Teaching has been made into an isolated experience while being a very social and interaction-based job. Teachers are overcoming difficulties, figuring out how to modify their virtual classrooms to meet our new reality, and changing the purpose of teaching. They have recently adapted their practices and have been creative to keep students engaged as every household has become a classroom. The epidemic has altered our instructors where; they have to balance teaching, student interaction, administrative responsibilities, taking care of their own families, and making learning materials to upload to the new learning modalities. Teachers all throughout the nation have seized the opportunity to collaborate with their students to build vibrant virtual learning communities. They have used word walls and whiteboards to decorate their living rooms, home offices, and bedrooms, giving the phrase "one-room schoolhouse" a whole new meaning.

Teachers are the unsung heroes during the pandemic as Andy Hargreaves (2021) confirmed that Pandemic conditions have underlined the value of teachers' earned expertise that is not readily replaced by the improvised support of parents and families when learning takes place at home; of the importance of emotions, relationships and identity and not just cognitive learning in the work and contributions of teaching; and of the value of social relations and in-person communication and collaboration among students and among the educators who teach and support them.

Table 3. Codes and frequencies related to the instructors' theme.

Theme	Codes	Frequency
Instructors actively take part in a quality learning experience.	Ensures relevant learning materials/activities in relation to the context of the learners and the demand of their course.	2
	Modules/Learning materials are made simpler, more manageable, and readable to ensure success on the part of learners.	1
	Identify and take into account the personal, social, and other issues in the lives of the students.	1
	Considerate	1

#### Best practices related to the Institution

Global educational institutions quickly went online in response to the epidemic. Students quickly transitioned from actual locations that offered them much-needed social contacts to spending hours per day sat in front of a screen. The transition to online platforms here in the Philippines has taken more slowly than in other countries, mostly because academic institutions there already had these platforms in place and the resources to run them there.

Tadesse, S. (2020) emphasized that students from low-income families with lower educational levels and children with poor learning motivation suffered the most during the coronavirus, but Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges ensured the efficacy of online education. It is important that the institution guarantees that the following circumstances are necessary for online learning to be effective: Compassionate educators getting the online course administration training they need, ensuring that the students get the necessary online learning that they deserve, platforms that offer customized education to accommodate each student's unique learning process.

Table 4. Codes and frequencies related to the Institution theme.

Theme	Codes	Frequency
The institution was doing its best to give quality education.	Utilized media-assisted learning and blended learning approach.	2
	Ensures learning materials/activities provided by their faculty are relevant to the context of the learners and demand of the industry.	3
	Learners can continue with their studies while working through the blended ALM chosen by the institution.	2
	Develops and makes available options for paid work experiences, internships, apprenticeships, and career exploration.	1
	Effective communication with the students and collaboration for innovation.	1
	Passionate/Responsive to the need	2
	Commitment to bring about good change	1

#### Challenges encountered by the institution in implementing alternative learning modalities

In this study investigating the challenges encountered by Mariner’s Polytechnic Colleges in implementing the alternative learning modalities instigated in the Covid-19 pandemic, five themes, and 13 codes were revealed as a result of the data analysis. The themes shown concerning the challenges were: “Internet Connectivity,” “Student,” “Facilities,” and “Instructor.”

Table 4. Themes and codes were revealed as a result of the analysis of the challenges faced in implementing Alternative learning modalities.

Theme	Number of Codes
Struggling with slow internet connection	2
Difficulty in providing learning facilities	3
Instructors lack training on the use of ALMS	3
Students struggling with the new learning modality	5

#### Challenges related to Internet Connectivity

The Internet Connectivity theme obtained as a result of the data analysis represents the challenges encountered, and there are two codes under this theme. Frequency indicates the number of participants revealing the relevant code. Table 5 demonstrates that many students struggle with reliable internet. Some students go the extra mile in search of a stable internet connection, while others don't have the option to go elsewhere and miss deadlines and must do without if their service is disrupted; there are students who are not lucky enough and resides in a far-flung community that even the internet connection has not reached their area.

Gierdowski, D. (2021) reported that not all internet access is not created equal. There are parents who can afford to have home internet access but are reliable enough to meet most of all their needs as a household. The respondents said that those with connections like an internet service provider (ISP) or with cable/fiber are more much reliable than those students who are connecting via a cellular phone.

Slow Internet connections or limited access from homes in rural areas can contribute to students falling behind academically, according to a new report from Michigan State University’s Quello Center. Educational setbacks can have significant impacts on academic success and career opportunities. Lack of internet connectivity can have a variety of negative effects on a student's academic performance. Without the internet, students are unable to communicate with their professors or peers, do their own research, or use online homework assistance. The incapacity of students without a home internet connection to finish their schoolwork is one of their main issues. Even families as a whole, if without an internet connection, they risk missing out on information or losing contact with their children's schools and teachers.

Kamal et al (2021) reported that teachers complained of the quality of their Internet connection is poor, which leads to be disconnected during virtual classrooms. This created a hassle for students and teachers in live online classes as videos got paused due to poor connectivity issues that generate communication gaps within teachers and pupils. Instructors utilized PowerPoint presentations and tests/assessments for online instruction, videos, and e-notes for students. This has increased instructors' burden, and they are now forced to work around the clock to answer students' questions whenever they arise.

Gierdowski, D. (2021) reported that students who must rely on their mobile devices for service (either as a primary or backup connection) may suffer less effective learning because of bandwidth restrictions (such as sluggish connections and data caps) and may find it difficult to pay for mobile data usage.

Table 5. Codes and frequencies related to the internet connectivity theme

Theme	Code	Frequency
Struggling with slow internet connection	Unstable internet connection	3
	Far-flung areas need better internet connectivity.	1

#### Challenges related to the Institution

Facilities of the institution theme obtained as a result of the data analysis represent the challenges individually faced by students during the implementation of the alternative learning modalities as shown by the two codes under this theme. Table 6 shows that the respondents mainly reported individual problems about facilities, such as the institution needing to provide a learning place for students to go to if they do not have the internet at home and there were no available online library/e-book or digitized resources provided to the students.

Many schools and community libraries were closed to accommodate social distance, making it challenging to check out real books. This made more readers and educators aware of the advantages of e-books and online learning resources. Most people use Google and various other platforms, including social media, to obtain and exchange information, however, leaning too heavily on social media has both benefits and drawbacks. Although it is a quick and simple means to spread the news to a large audience, most material is frequently "forwarded" to others without being verified for accuracy. A library is the best resource in this chaotic environment to save people from rumors and misinformation. Still, with the shutdown of schools and libraries, students have been deprived of the much-needed resources to aid them with their studies. Ofgang (2021) emphasized that digital books were lovely before the pandemic and seen as accessories or digital resources with particular utility. During the pandemic, digital books are perceived more as a necessity.

Table 6. Codes and frequencies related to facilities theme

Theme	Code	Frequency
Difficulty in providing learning facilities	No learning spaces are offered to students without an internet connection.	1
	No online library/textbooks/digitized resources provided to students.	2

Asio et al., (2021) also highlighted that institution should provide internet facilities and an environment for students much to the contrary regulated by the government where schools were told to close it to the public and made face-to-face learning impossible which hampered the educational pursuit of students.

#### Challenges related to Instructor

The theme instructors obtained as a result of the data analysis represents one of the challenges encountered by the respondents during the implementation of the alternative learning modalities, as shown by the three codes under this theme. Examining Table 7 represents the respondents who reported problems related to instructors that there are instructors who, despite the training conducted by the institution, need help to adapt to the new normal and are having difficulties in their teaching. Some teachers need more training in using google classroom and google meet. Some instructors need help to quickly adjust to using apps to communicate with their students.

Teachers have to change to the digital age, navigate technology phobia instantly, and put in a lot of effort to benefit their students. According to A, the availability of resources for professional development that can assist teachers in acquiring the knowledge and comfort necessary to implement technology dependably and successfully is another challenge they face. Thalberg (2019), many teachers are hesitant to incorporate new technologies into their classrooms because they may not feel the need for computers to alter their methods after decades of effectively instructing students and imparting essential knowledge. Other teachers may be reluctant to adopt modern technology as they need knowledge and training to use laptops and online applications. Some teachers who are unfamiliar with new technologies refuse to alter how they conduct their lessons since doing so requires technical competence.

Table 7. Codes and frequencies related to instructor theme.

Theme	Code	Frequency
Instructors need more training on the use of ALMS.	Some instructors need more training	2
	Insufficient knowledge on computer-based apps and software.	3
	Difficulties in adapting to the new normal	3

#### Challenges related to students

The theme students obtained as a result of the data analysis represents one of the challenges encountered by the respondents during the implementation of the alternative learning modalities, as shown by the five codes under this theme. Examining Table 8 represents the respondents who reported problems related to students who despite the announcement by the institution that there will be distance learning. There are also parents who cannot afford to buy their children laptop to use for the online classes and find it difficult to adapt to the new normal. There are

also some students who are fearful of the new normal and adjusting is difficult to them and when there is more than enough user in a household, it sometimes interferes with the stability of the internet connection.

According to the report of M. Lim (2021), based on the survey of the Department of Education that an unstable mobile or internet connection is viewed as the top challenge that may affect a child's learning process through distance education. Asio et al (2021) pointed out that one of the biggest challenges to addressing the problem regarding learning is the availability of technological gadgets and internet connectivity. Some parents do not have the capacity to buy their children laptops all at the same time, so there are students who take turns using their laptops, especially if there are other siblings who would need gadgets for their studies as well.

Since the coronavirus first appeared in Wuhan in 2019, fear of COVID-19 has spread swiftly among humans worldwide. Van DTH et al. (2022) confirmed students were moderately afraid of the COVID-19 pandemic but had a high level of adaptability in online learning; prior studies highlighted the vital role of adaptability in constructing students' engagement and achievements, reducing students' failure dynamics. Van DTH (2022) quoted Holliman et al. (2018), emphasized the connection between adaptability and students' engagement and long-term achievement. Adaptability plays an essential role in students' positive development.

Table 8. Codes and frequencies related to student theme.

Theme	Code	Frequency
Students struggling with the new learning modality	Unstable Internet connection	1
	Some do not have gadgets for learning.	1
	Difficulties adapting to the new normal	4
	Fearsome to the new normal	2

#### 4. Conclusion

The evaluation report indicated that institutions adopted the alternative learning modality because of the pandemic. In the same way, the study shows and identifies some of the best practices involved as well as challenges that both stakeholders experienced. With the help of technology, online classrooms made it possible to continue the effectiveness of socialization in the online environment. Still, students have the opportunities to interact and engage through discussion and collaboration, to gain meaningful learning experiences in this kind of modality. It has to be noted that there are challenges encountered, but through relative strategy and the actual adoption of the alternative modality will meet the potential gradually.

#### 6. Recommendations

The institution may adopt new pedagogical techniques designed specifically for blended learning environments. To ensure strong course alignment and effective student learning for all these modes of instruction, increase student retention, build necessary support structures, and train faculty more effectively. With the online availability of lessons, teachers are trained to deliver interactive sessions in remote setups. Focus group discussions are conducted after every session via an online group video call to get insights and improve a child's perception. This way, students can be encouraged to participate, and their learning materials can be enhanced.

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