

Planning, Implementation and Feedback of the Experiential Pharmacy Practice (EPP) Catch up Plan of a Local University in the NCR: A Program Development Research

Justine Marie A. Ocampo, Maria Fay Nenette M. Cariaga, Estela DV Barasi
Institute of Pharmacy, University of Makati, Makati City
justinemarie.ocampo@umak.edu.ph

Abstract

In the Philippines, the Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) including local universities were prompted to plan and prepare for the implementation of limited face-to-face classes following the release of the CHED memoranda. As a response, a 5-day catch-up plan was conducted at a local university followed by a 3-day internship onsite at a renowned private university in NCR. This research aimed to determine the feedback of sixteen (16) level 4 students along the said catch up plan and onsite hospital pharmacy exposure. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches (concurrent mixed-methods) were used in this study. Online survey using a feedback questionnaire with content adopted from the requirements stated in JMC 2021-004 was administered. Results reveal that the indicators under areas of planning and implementation were rated by the respondents as outstanding indicating very high satisfaction on the implementation of the catch up plan. The themes generated from the qualitative data include positive learning experiences and contextualized learning supplemented online learning. The best features of the program are along areas of instructors/facilitators who have relevant teaching styles, teaching-learning activities that warrant team collaboration, lessons translated to practice, practical assessment and appropriate learning engagement. Points for improvement include increase in days allotted for the catch up plan, some materials required for the laboratory needed budget, lack of isolation rooms and difficulty in fulfilling pre-deployment requirements. The respondents believe in the possibility of hybrid learning. Overall, the 8-day catch-up plan became a worthwhile experience for the learners of a local university in NCR.

Keywords: Catch up plan, Catch up plan of a Local University in NCR

Introduction

Universities have been closed since 2020 because of COVID-19 health crisis. An estimated 27 million students in the Philippines have lost more than 2 years of in-person learning. While the implementation of Flexible Learning Modality is still strongly encouraged by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) including local universities were prompted to plan and prepare for the implementation of limited face-to-face classes following the release of the memoranda, CHED-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2021 - 004, Guidelines on the Implementation of the Limited face-to-face classes for all programs of higher

education in areas under alert level systems as COVID-19 response, and CMO No. 5 s. 2021, Guidelines of the Conduct of Experiential Pharmacy Practice of Pharmacy Students during the Pandemic.

The provisions stipulated in the aforesaid memoranda include the general guidelines to be followed by different institutions who plan to implement limited F2F classes, and specific guidelines on the conduct of EPP, respectively.

With the approval coming from the university's top management, a 5-day catch-up plan was conducted at a local university followed by a 3-day internship onsite at a renowned private university in NCR. Pharmacy practice areas of priority were identified and activities were designed tailored fit to the current times.

This research aimed to determine the feedback of students along the said catch up plan and onsite hospital pharmacy exposure.

Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches (concurrent mixed-methods) were used in this study; particularly SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, and online survey using a feedback questionnaire with contents adopted from the requirements stated in JMC 2021-004. Essay questions were incorporated in the questionnaire to gather qualitative data. In addition, reflective questions were answered verbally in the form of sharing by the students at the end of every activity. Preparation for the catch-up plan including hospital pharmacy exposure started in January 2022. The implementation period was from April 25 to April 29, 2022 and May 2-5, 2022, respectively. Data gathering commenced on May 9, 2022.

Descriptive statistics, particularly central tendency (mean ratings) was used to analyze the gathered data. The researchers used Likert scale with the following descriptive interpretations: 4 - *Outstanding (your level of satisfaction is very high)*; 3 - *Very good (your level of satisfaction is high)*; 2 - *Good (your level of satisfaction is somewhat high)*; 1 - *Fair (your level of satisfaction is low)*. *Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data.*

Results and Discussion

Planning

The planning phase involved the following activities: approval from management committee to conduct catch up plan at the university, prioritization of courses that needed enhancement (Adult vaccination, Extemporaneous compounding, IV Admixture, Instrumentation, Pharmaceutical Analysis and Onsite face-to-face internship at a private tertiary hospital), preparation of teaching learning activities (catch-up plan manual) including rubric and other assessment tools, scheduling of alternating schemes of demonstration and return demonstration and fulfillment of student requirements (personal information sheet, vaccination record, medical certificate issued by the medical and dental clinic, medical insurance certificate, internship agreement and waiver) set by the linkages department and quality management development center of the university.

Implementation

The implementation phase involved execution of the activities put in place during the planning phase. There were 16 students who participated in the catch-up plan.

Areas of Feedback

The researchers instructed the respondents (level 4 BS Pharmacy students) to evaluate the areas of implementation of the catch-up plan at the university and internship at a private tertiary hospital using a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest and 1 being the lowest via google forms.

The quantitative evaluative areas were based on the institutional application requirements stipulated in the CHED memorandum. The areas include: pre-deployment procedures, activities, learning engagement and health and safety protocols.

Qualitatively, perceptions of the respondents were gathered on the following parameters: effect on practice readiness, helpfulness to online learning and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of the catch-up plan.

Pre-deployment procedure

Sixteen (16) level 4 officially enrolled in Experiential Pharmacy Practice underwent the stringent procedures laid down by the CLCDP (Center for Linkages, Development, Communications and Partnership). To wit: step 1 – internship orientation and oath taking, step 2 – securing medical certificate from the medical and dental clinic stating that the student is fit to participate in the “catch-up” plan, step 3 – securing final endorsement from CLCDP after accomplishment and submission of requirements.

Table 1. Pre-deployment procedure

	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1. CLCDP Requirements	2.875	VERY GOOD
2. Center Orientation/Briefing	3.5	OUTSTANDING
MEAN	3.19	VERY GOOD

Legend: 3.26 - 4.00 (Outstanding); 2.51 - 3.25 (Very good); 1.76 - 2.50 (Good); 1.00 - 1.75 (Fair)

The table above shows that the pre-deployment procedures were generally rated as "VERY GOOD" by the respondents. This means that their level of satisfaction on the implementation of guidelines under this category is high. Some of the respondents offered suggestions that pre-deployment procedures must be conducted ahead of time to avoid delays and also for them to allot a budget for such endeavors. They also mentioned that the given requirements are a hassle to complete and stated that students' health should come first.

Activities

The Center of Pharmacy crafted a Learning Continuity Plan focusing on topics that need emphasis and actual demonstration. The teaching - activities were practical in nature and included rubric to assess the technical knowledge and practical skills they learned during the activity.

Table 2. Activities

	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Selection as to importance/relevance to practice	3.86	OUTSTANDING
2. Order in the execution/facilitation	3.75	OUTSTANDING
3. Duration	3.25	VERY GOOD
4. Practicality of T-L Materials	3.5	OUTSTANDING
5. Rubrics or assessment tools	3.5	OUTSTANDING

 used

MEAN 3.57 OUTSTANDING

Legend: 3.26 - 4.00 (Outstanding); 2.51 - 3.25 (Very good); 1.76 - 2.50 (Good); 1.00 - 1.75 (Fair)

The table above shows that the activities given to students were generally rated as “OUTSTANDING” by the respondents. This means that their level of satisfaction on the implementation of activities under the category is very high. The respondents cited that though the activities given were mostly laboratory in nature, these were important and relevant. These helped them to recall concepts they learned during the 3-year online classes. The respondents said they were able to observe, learn and practice the knowledge their preceptors gained from their experiences. In addition, the respondents shared that the execution and facilitation of the catch up plan were excellent. One of the respondents commended the alternating schemes which allowed them to share ideas and experiences. As regards the duration of the catch-up plan, some of the respondents mentioned that time was mostly maximized, but they suggested increasing the time allotment in the catch up plan. The teaching-learning materials were very practical, and easy to understand. However, one of the respondents suggested that the administration should consider shouldering the cost of the materials.

Learning Engagement

The study of Buenaventura, et. al, 2021 entitled “Remote Online Learning Engagement” identified four (4) learning engagement dimensions: learner-to-instructor, learner-to-peer, learner-to-content, learner-to-family content. In this study, the researchers utilized these domains including self-directed learning as indicators of successful implementation of the catch-up plan under learning engagement.

Table 3. Learning Engagement

	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Interaction with facilitator	3.81	OUTSTANDING
2. Interaction with peers	3.88	OUTSTANDING
3. Interaction with materials used	3.56	OUTSTANDING
4. Self-directed learning	3.56	OUTSTANDING
	MEAN 3.70	OUTSTANDING

Legend: 3.26 - 4.00 (Outstanding); 2.51 - 3.25 (Very good); 1.76 - 2.50 (Good); 1.00 - 1.75 (Fair)

Gleaning from the table above, the respondents generally rated learning engagement as "OUTSTANDING." This means that they have very high satisfaction on the implementation of the catch up plan along this category. They mentioned that facilitators are approachable, very patient and that they are able to ask questions during the demonstration. They also enjoyed the activities conducted with their peers and were very enthusiastic towards collaborating with them. They also had no issue/problem on the materials used during the catch up plan and further described these as appropriate for the catch up plan. On self-directed learning, the respondents recognized the fact that they learned to trust themselves during the conduct of experiments because these were done individually.

Kolb's Learning Cycle Model introduces the four learning styles namely: diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating. These learning styles requires student interaction with the facilitator, peers and materials.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

On September 20, 2021, the Philippine government approved a pilot-run of limited in-person schooling in low risk areas. UNICEF has been working closely with the education and health departments to support planning and preparation to ensure that safety measures are imposed. To secure the safe reopening of the university that will allow the implementation of the catch up plan for the BS Pharmacy program, the Center of Pharmacy submitted to the QMDC the center-documentary requirements based from the Self-Assessment Checklist in the CMO.

The documents submitted by the center included the following: learning continuity plan, topics to be delivered, profile of students/participants, schedule of activities and center health and safety protocols. Besides these, the students were also mandated to follow the internship procedures set by the CLCDP.

Sixteen (16) level 4 students participated in an oath to follow strictly health and safety protocols set by the university.

Table 4. Health and Safety Protocols

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Management Oversight	3.60	OUTSTANDING

2. Institutional Policies and Protocols	3.38	OUTSTANDING
3. Controls	3.32	OUTSTANDING
MEAN	3.70	OUTSTANDING

The table above show that the respondents rated health and safety protocols as "OUTSTANDING." This means that they are very highly satisfied with the implementation of health and safety protocols in the university. The respondents were grateful that the university allowed them to learn on campus under a safe environment because of the strict implementation of health and safety protocols. They commend the university for following necessary procedures and protocols to ensure the safety of the students.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

The following are the themes generated based on the qualitative feedback of the respondents.

1. Positive Learning Experience

One of the respondents mentioned that the program helped them to be ready for the professional world skills wise and knowledge wise. They noted that they are more confident in executing laboratory procedures.

In contrast, one of the respondents said that he/she is not fully ready to be immersed in the field but the activities managed his/her expectations on the professional roles of pharmacists.

2. Contextualized activities supplemented online learning.

Learning the theory with application is the clamor of students engaged in online learning. Activities should be parallel to the learning objectives. One of the respondents said that the activities in the catch up plan validated what they know and what they should still need to enhance.

Further, they mentioned that the activities were direct, contextualized and are geared towards achieving the learning outcomes.

3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths

According to the respondents, the best features of the program are along areas of instructors/facilitators who have relevant teaching styles, teaching-learning activities that warrant team collaboration, lessons translated to practice, practical assessment and appropriate learning

engagement. They mentioned that the program was properly planned from orientation to implementation and post-evaluation.

Weaknesses

Points for improvement include increase in days allotted for the catch-up plan, some materials required for the laboratory needed budget, lack of isolation rooms and difficulty in fulfilling pre-deployment requirements.

Opportunities

The respondents believe in the possibility of hybrid learning. They mentioned that a catch up plan such as this can be a basis in retooling teaching learning plans and the curriculum.

Threats

The only threat mentioned by the respondents is the current health crisis situation - COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

Overall, the 8-day catch-up plan became a worthwhile experience for the learners of a local university in NCR. The areas of planning and implementation were rated by the respondents as OUTSTANDING which means that they are very highly satisfied with the implementation of the catch up plan.

Moving forward, institutions should be armed with standard policies on health and safety when crises like this occur again. Furthermore, standard learning continuity plans must be in place in case crises disadvantage the education sector once again.

Acknowledgements

The researchers sincerely express gratitude to the contributors of this research, the offices involved in the planning and implementation phases, the students who served as participants and respondents of this study and their parents who trusted the center of pharmacy and allowed them to be participants of the 8-day catch-up plan. Finally, the highest praise and gratitude goes to God, Almighty, Who is the main reason for all that we do.

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