# Adapting Flexible Learning Methods: Kindergarten Teachers in Focus

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**Abstract:** This qualitative phenomenological study investigates the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in Sta. Maria West District, Davao Occidental, as they adapt flexible learning methods to teach their learners. Utilizing semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, ten kindergarten teachers were purposively selected to provide comprehensive insights. The findings highlight significant barriers in resource accessibility, including limited technological tools, scarcity of learning materials, and transportation and geographical challenges. Despite these obstacles, teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to professional development, emotional support, and peer collaboration, which enhance their adaptability and effectiveness. Community involvement, through parental engagement, community resources, and volunteer support, plays a pivotal role in overcoming resource limitations and enriching the educational experience. Additionally, pedagogical adjustments such as adapting curricula to local contexts, using local languages, and implementing blended learning techniques are identified as essential strategies. Innovations and community-specific solutions further enable teachers to manage material shortages and foster collaborative learning environments. These insights underscore the resilience and resourcefulness of teachers, highlighting the importance of supportive educational management practices to sustain flexible learning initiatives in rural settings.

*Keywords: Educational Management, Flexible Learning, Kindergarten Teachers.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Learners have different ways of learning based on their strengths, but many struggle to adapt to current learning environments, leading to decreased motivation and a sense of disconnection. This impacts both individual and collective progress, making it essential to find effective strategies that support and empower all learners. Exploring the issue within different local contexts can help provide a deeper understanding of the challenges.

Learners across various settings face challenges that impact their motivation and engagement, including academic difficulties, mental health conditions, lack of resources, unclear instructions, and limited peer communication. Studies in the U.S. and the Philippines reveal that adaptive challenges—such as adjusting to online learning environments—are more prominent than technical issues, particularly for low-income and rural students. In Sta. Maria, students struggle with limited access to gadgets and internet connectivity, prompting the need for Flexible Learning Methods. These methods, which emphasize personalized schedules and learning tools, aim to cater to learners' individual needs. The study seeks to explore teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of Flexible Learning Methods in creating better educational opportunities and boosting student motivation.

The study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on flexible learning methods, focusing on how these approaches helped students adjust to classroom environments and overcome learning difficulties. It also examined the impact of flexible learning on students' motivation and learning efficiency, both at home and in school. Ultimately, the research sought to determine the overall effectiveness of these methods for the broader benefit of learners.

The reviewed literature highlighted the relevance of Flexible Learning Methods in addressing the ongoing learning challenges students face, especially due to constant societal changes. It emphasized how learners struggled to adjust during the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to the new normal, which impacted their motivation. Flexible Learning Methods were seen as a solution, offering adaptable schedules and approaches that align with students' needs and help improve their academic engagement and skills. Overall, these methods were viewed as essential tools for helping learners cope, adapt, and stay motivated in their educational journey.

The study was based on Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning (1984), which outlines four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This theory explains how individuals learn through direct experience,

reflection, forming ideas, and applying them in action. It supports the study by showing how Flexible Learning Methods help learners adapt to changes by engaging in this process. These methods promote innovation and address challenges in transitional learning settings, helping students fully understand and learn from their experiences to grow and succeed academically.

## II. METHOD

The researcher used a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to achieve the study's objectives. This type of research focuses on exploring and interpreting the meanings individuals attach to their personal experiences. It involves gathering rich, descriptive data through interviews, observations, and other methods that allow for an in-depth understanding of participants' thoughts and emotions. The phenomenological method was chosen to closely examine the lived experiences of teachers in adapting to flexible learning methods, making it possible to capture their personal insights, challenges, and coping strategies. This approach allowed the researcher to identify shared themes and understand the essence of how flexible learning has influenced teaching practices and interactions with students.

The study was guided by philosophical assumptions aligned with phenomenological research. The ontological assumption acknowledged that each teacher's reality is subjective and uniquely shaped by personal experiences, prompting the researcher to value diverse narratives without imposing fixed categories. Epistemologically, a constructivist stance was taken, where knowledge was co-created through collaborative interviews, emphasizing mutual understanding and authentic insight. Axiologically, the research upheld ethical integrity by respecting participants' values and experiences, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Rhetorically, the study adopted a personal and narrative tone, using first-person language to reflect active researcher involvement and clearly convey the essence of teachers' lived experiences.

The study followed the qualitative assumption of subjective interpretivism, which emphasizes that individuals construct their own realities based on unique experiences, emotions, and contexts. The researcher approached teachers' lived experiences with openness, allowing them to share their personal journeys with flexible learning without bias. Through in-depth interviews, meaning was co-constructed as participants described their perceptions, challenges, and insights. The researcher actively listened, clarified responses, and focused on interpreting their narratives to uncover recurring themes.

The study involved 10 kindergarten teachers from Sta. Maria West District, Davao Occidental, selected for their direct experience with flexible learning methods. Five participated in in-depth interviews and five in a focus group discussion, allowing for both personal and collective insights. Using purposive sampling, the researcher deliberately chose teachers who met specific criteria: current employment in the district, at least two years of teaching experience, hands-on

involvement with flexible learning approaches, and willingness to participate voluntarily. This ensured that the data gathered was rich, relevant, and reflective of authentic classroom experiences.

The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview questionnaire to collect in-depth data on the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers adapting flexible learning methods. This tool, designed with open-ended questions, enabled participants to share personal and detailed narratives. The questionnaire was developed by identifying key themes from relevant literature, then refined with input from expert validators to ensure clarity, relevance, and sensitivity to the teachers' experiences. The final version of the instrument was carefully crafted to ensure it captured meaningful insights aligned with the study's objectives.

The data gathering began with securing endorsement from The Rizal Memorial Colleges and ethical clearance from its Research Ethics Committee. Approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao Occidental was then obtained, followed by coordination with school principals. Using purposive sampling, ten kindergarten teachers from Sta. Maria West District were selected—five for in-depth interviews (IDIs) and five for a focus group discussion (FGD). Interviews, conducted online or in person, were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Verbatim transcripts were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's method, focusing on teachers' experiences, coping strategies, and insights into flexible learning. Findings were interpreted alongside existing literature and led to practical recommendations for improving flexible learning practices.

This study ensured data triangulation by using both in-depth interviews (IDIs) and a focus group discussion (FGD) with kindergarten teachers in Sta. Maria West District, Davao Occidental, allowing for cross-validation of individual and collective experiences in adapting flexible learning methods. Five teachers participated in IDIs to provide personal narratives, while another five joined an FGD to share and build on each other's insights. All sessions were recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, was applied by familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, and refining them to reflect common challenges, coping strategies, and reflections. This approach, supported by field notes, provided a comprehensive and credible understanding of the teachers' lived experiences.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first section entailed the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in adapting flexible learning methods revealed five key themes: resource accessibility, teacher preparedness and support, community involvement and support, pedagogical adjustments, and innovations tailored to specific community needs.

The second section revealed the coping strategies of kindergarten teachers in using flexible learning methods include resource management, emotional and social support, pedagogical innovations, and personal and professional growth. Despite limited resources, teachers show resilience and creativity by effectively managing materials, time, and finances to sustain quality education.

The insights from kindergarten teachers' experiences with flexible learning methods highlight key themes: learner engagement and motivation, overcoming resource constraints, strengthening community ties, and teacher growth and adaptability. These insights underscore how flexibility in teaching fosters both student learning and teacher development amid challenges.

The experiences of kindergarten teachers in Sta. Maria West District, Davao Occidental, highlight their resilience and adaptability in implementing flexible learning despite various challenges. Key themes include limited resource accessibility, where teachers face technological, material, and geographical barriers, yet respond with resourcefulness and community engagement. Teachers also rely heavily on emotional and peer support, showing the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility. They adapt pedagogical strategies to local contexts, use blended and interactive methods, and foster learner engagement through culturally relevant content. The development of innovative teaching solutions, strong community ties, and personal and professional growth through ongoing learning and reflective practice underscore their commitment to quality education in a flexible learning setup.

The findings underscore important implications for educational management in supporting kindergarten teachers' use of flexible learning methods. Key recommendations include improving access to essential resources such as technology and learning materials, addressing geographical barriers, and supporting teacher preparedness through continuous professional development and emotional support. Community engagement is also vital, with managers encouraged to involve parents and local stakeholders to build a strong support network. Additionally, educational leaders should promote pedagogical innovations by supporting curriculum flexibility, blended learning, and culturally responsive teaching. Strengthening coping strategies through efficient resource management, fostering peer and community support, and encouraging teacher resilience and adaptability further enhance the effectiveness of flexible learning.

The study recommended that the Department of Education (DepEd) address resource limitations in rural schools by providing adequate technological tools and expanding professional development focused on flexible learning and teacher well-being. School heads were advised to implement strategic resource management, foster a supportive work environment, and promote collaboration and community engagement to enhance educational delivery. Kindergarten teachers were encouraged to pursue continuous learning, practice self-care, and actively involve parents and

communities in the learning process. For learners, it was suggested to create culturally relevant, interactive, and engaging environments that supported autonomy and critical thinking. Lastly, future researchers were urged to explore the long-term effects of flexible learning, evaluate teacher coping strategies, and investigate the impact of community involvement on sustaining flexible learning practices.

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