

Lessons in Academic Continuity: Evaluating Flexible Learning Transitions During Energy Emergencies

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ABSTRACT

Following Executive Order No. 110, which declared a State of National Energy Emergency in the Philippines due to global oil supply disruptions, higher education institutions faced dual burdens of transportation inflation and rolling power blackouts. Anchored in Systemic Crisis Leadership Theory, the Emergency Remote Teaching Framework, and the Community of Inquiry Model, this study evaluated the transition to a Flexible Learning Modality at Aldersgate College Inc. during Academic Year 2025–2026. This study used a mixed-methods descriptive institutional evaluation design, analyzing survey feedback from $n = 62$ stakeholders (dominated by tertiary students at 90.32%) using frequency and percentage distributions alongside qualitative thematic synthesis. Results demonstrated that the flexible learning shift provided significant financial relief, insulating 79.03% of households from commuting expenses, while flexible policies mitigated operational risks for 83.87% of respondents experiencing power grid disruptions. Academic continuity was highly rated, with 98.39% satisfied with instructional module quality and 96.77% praising faculty leniency regarding deadlines during blackouts. 95.16% rated institutional crisis communication favorably, though minor administrative processing delays occurred. Overall, 96.77% evaluated the emergency response as effective. Strategic recommendations include institutionalizing automatic deadline extensions during blackouts, standardizing a centralized Learning Management System (LMS), deploying low-bandwidth offline materials, and improving campus power-generator redundancy.

Keywords: Emergency remote teaching, flexible learning, national energy emergency, educational continuity, crisis leadership

INTRODUCTION

On March 24, 2026, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signed Executive Order No. 110, officially declaring a State of National Energy Emergency across the Philippines. The order placed the country under an emergency framework for one year to safeguard domestic energy security, stabilize volatile fuel prices, and protect vulnerable economic sectors from severe external shocks.

The declaration was triggered by escalating hostilities in the Middle East, specifically involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, which compromised critical global oil production

and shipping corridors. Most notably, disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz, a vital maritime bottleneck through which nearly 20% of global petroleum flows, constrained fuel supplies worldwide.

As a net importer of oil and petroleum products, the Philippines found itself exposed to sudden price spikes and inventory risks. Energy Secretary Sharon Garin noted that national stockpiles remained manageable—with 45 days of diesel, 53 days of gasoline, and 61 days of fuel oil—but warned that sustained global disruptions posed an "imminent danger" to the country's power grid and overall economy.

In response, agencies across the country worked to establish and implement measures to coordinate public relief efforts, manage fuel consumption, provide fuel subsidies, and expedite cash grants for affected sectors.

Aldersgate College Inc. joined in the efforts to mitigate the impact of the energy emergency among stakeholders. In response, the Office of the President released a memorandum on the implementation of Flexible Learning Modality beginning April 13, 2026 until the end of Academic Year 2025-2026, to include the summer term, unless revoked through subsequent issuances. The measure was adopted to support academic continuity while upholding student welfare, learning outcomes, and institutional sustainability.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the extent to which the transition to the Flexible Learning Modality at Aldersgate College Inc. effectively balanced academic rigor with stakeholder well-being during the State of National Energy Emergency.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of primary role and institutional/academic unit?
2. To what extent did the Flexible Learning Modality provide financial and operational relief to stakeholders during the energy emergency?
3. How effective was the Flexible Learning Modality in maintaining academic continuity and delivery?
4. How efficient was the institutional support provided during the flexible learning transition?
5. What is the overall perceived effectiveness of Aldersgate College Inc.'s emergency response in balancing academic continuity with stakeholder welfare?
6. Based on qualitative feedback and stakeholder recommendations, what strategic operational adjustments can be proposed to refine future emergency response frameworks and flexible learning policies?

Scope and Delimitations

This evaluation covers the implementation of the Flexible Learning Modality at Aldersgate College Inc. from April 13, 2026, through the remainder of Academic Year 2025–2026. The scope encompasses feedback from 62 institutional respondents across various academic levels and administrative units. Findings overwhelmingly reflect the student experience at the undergraduate level, as tertiary students comprise 90.32% of the sample. Consequently, the study may not adequately represent the full operational perspectives of faculty, staff, basic education, or graduate programs.

Review of Related Literature

The transition to flexible learning during crisis situations involves balancing national policy mandates, institutional governance, and pedagogical adaptation. This review synthesizes literature across two primary themes: the national energy policy context in the Philippines and institutional crisis response strategies in higher education.

National Energy Emergencies and Educational Impact

Global geopolitical instability frequently destabilizes energy markets, exposing oil-dependent nations to severe supply disruptions and price volatility. Disruptions along critical maritime bottlenecks, such as the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly a fifth of global petroleum flows, trigger rapid cost inflation across energy sectors. As a net importer of petroleum products, the Philippines is particularly vulnerable to these external macroeconomic shocks. State interventions during such crises often manifest through emergency frameworks like Executive Order No. 110, which prioritize domestic energy security, fuel management, and economic relief across vulnerable sectors.

In the education sector, energy emergencies impose dual burdens: financial strain and operational disruption. Inflation in fuel and utility prices inflates the cost of daily living, commuting, and food allowances for students and educational personnel. At the same time, national energy deficits lead to rolling electricity outages, directly jeopardizing regular campus operations and household connectivity. The literature emphasizes that during utility crises, educational institutions must proactively reduce physical attendance requirements to ease household financial pressure and insulate academic schedules from local power grid failures.

Institutional Adaptation and Flexible Pedagogy in Times of Crisis

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) and Flexible Learning Modalities (FLM) serve as essential mechanisms for maintaining academic continuity during national disruptions. Unlike planned online education, crisis-driven flexible learning requires rapid adaptation of course delivery, assessment windows, and administrative support systems. Key factors determining the success of emergency flexible learning include:

- Effective emergency pedagogy relies on asynchronous, low-bandwidth materials (such as downloadable modules and recorded lectures) that accommodate students experiencing intermittent power outages or limited internet access.
- Academic continuity models stress the importance of faculty empathy. Policy accommodations such as extended project deadlines, modified attendance cutoffs, and

flexible submission windows prevent power grid instabilities from penalizing academic performance.

- Timely, transparent messaging from administrative leadership minimizes confusion during schedule transitions. Operational success also depends on maintaining accessible administrative services (e.g., Registrar, Finance, IT Helpdesk) and strengthening technical infrastructure like campus backup power and centralized Learning Management Systems (LMS).

Taken together, these domains show that institutional crisis management cannot focus solely on academic delivery; it must also address student welfare, financial relief, and infrastructural resilience to ensure effective academic continuity.

Theoretical Framework

Global energy disruptions and state interventions, such as Executive Order No. 110 in the Philippines, affect education by driving severe inflation and causing household power outages. To maintain academic continuity, schools adopt Flexible Learning Modalities (FLM) and Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Successful emergency remote learning relies on asynchronous, low-bandwidth resources; faculty leniency on deadlines and attendance; clear leadership messaging; accessible administrative support; and resilient technical infrastructure.

The text anchors crisis management in three theoretical frameworks:

- Systemic Crisis Leadership Theory (Boin et al., 2005; Fernandez & Shaw, 2020), which guides how administrative leadership detects threats, formulates policy, communicates decisions, restores operations, and evaluates response measures during shocks.
- Emergency Remote Teaching Framework (Hodges et al., 2020), which focuses on rapid pedagogical adaptation through offline-accessible learning materials, modified submission schedules, and flexible attendance policies.
- Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000), which emphasizes the integration of Teaching Presence (structured design), Social Presence (empathy and mutual support), and Cognitive Presence (sustained learning) during remote instruction. Effective institutional crisis response must concurrently manage strategic leadership decisions, flexible instruction, and student welfare to ensure academic continuity and stakeholder well-being.

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework adopts the Input-Process-Output (IPO) Model to illustrate the systemic relationship between external emergency triggers, institutional response mechanisms, and outcomes related to academic continuity and stakeholder well-being.

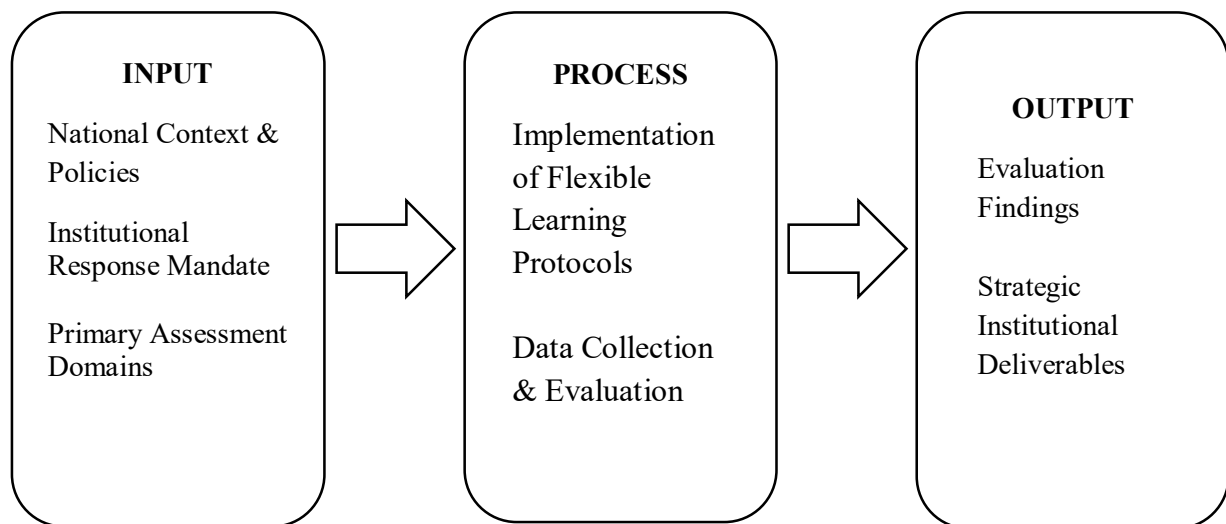


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive institutional evaluation design utilizing a mixed quantitative and qualitative survey approach.

Research Steps

Following the implementation of the Flexible Learning Modality, the data-gathering process commenced with the formulation and institutional distribution of an evaluation survey.

After collection, the quantitative responses were organized through frequency (f) counts and percentage (%) distribution calculations to profile respondents and assess outcomes across the primary evaluation domains.

Concurrently, qualitative feedback gathered from open-ended survey entries was systematically categorized and evaluated using thematic analysis to identify recurring operational insights and stakeholder recommendations.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Data were gathered via an institutional online survey instrument (N=62) administered across administrative, teaching, non-teaching, and student bodies.

Data Analysis Methods

Frequency counts and percentage distributions were used for quantitative survey items. The researchers analyzed qualitative data using thematic analysis.

Research Hypothesis and Validation

Given that this institutional study utilizes a non-experimental, descriptive-evaluative research design to profile responses and assess stakeholder satisfaction during an emergency shift, explicit inferential null hypotheses were not formally formulated for statistical significance testing

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Interpret this study's findings within the context of its methodological limitations.

Primarily, the survey sample exhibits a substantial demographic imbalance, as respondents were heavily skewed toward undergraduate tertiary students (90.32%). Teaching personnel, non-teaching staff, basic education, and graduate program stakeholders accounted for minor fractions of the total sample.

The study observed strict ethical standards to protect participant rights and data integrity. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the study's purpose before completion. To safeguard participant privacy, all survey responses were collected anonymously, ensuring that no personally identifiable information was linked to individual feedback or ratings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of primary role and institutional/academic unit?

The sample is heavily dominated by students, who account for over 91% of total respondents. Administrators and teaching personnel represent small fractions, while non-teaching personnel did not participate.

The vast majority of respondents belong to the Tertiary/College level. Basic Education, Graduate Programs, and Administration each comprise an equal, minor portion of the sample.

Because undergraduate students (91.94%) and tertiary-level respondents (90.32%) constitute nearly the entire sample, the survey outcomes primarily reflect the operational perspectives, financial impact, and academic experiences of college students rather than those of faculty, staff, or basic education units.

SOP 2. To what extent did the Flexible Learning Modality provide financial and operational relief to stakeholders during the energy emergency?

The transition to flexible learning cushioned most households against transportation costs, fuel price spikes, and daily expenses caused by the energy crisis.

A combined 79.03% of respondents reported experiencing a reduction in their daily financial burden (37.10% slight, 29.03% moderate, and 12.90% significant reduction), 14.52% experienced no change in their daily expenses, and a small subgroup of 6.45% reported an increase in overall costs due to shifting electricity and home internet bills.

While the modality insulated students from daily campus commutes, power grid instability remained a widespread household challenge.

83.87% of respondents experienced power disruptions to some degree during the emergency period; 45.16% had rare technical delays, 30.65% saw occasional but manageable outages, 8.06% felt frequent power loss causing missed lectures/deadlines, while only 16.13% experienced no power disruptions at all.

The Flexible Learning Modality provided direct financial relief to nearly four-fifths of households by eliminating daily commuting costs. Operationally, because over 38% of stakeholders faced moderate-to-major rolling blackouts, remote learning policies such as asynchronous delivery and flexible submission cutoffs served as vital operational safety nets to keep students from falling behind academically.

SOP 3. How effective was the Flexible Learning Modality in maintaining academic continuity and delivery?

The Flexible Learning Modality was highly effective in maintaining academic continuity and instructional delivery during the emergency period, achieving near-unanimous stakeholder satisfaction across teaching materials and faculty policy flexibility.

An overwhelming 98.39% of respondents evaluated the instructional quality, online/offline learning modules, and course materials favorably

Teaching strategies, asynchronous module design, and distribution methods effectively preserved educational standards without degrading quality in the eyes of students despite ongoing utility disruptions.

A combined 96.77% of respondents expressed high satisfaction with faculty members' leniency and policy accommodations regarding attendance and project deadlines during power outages. This suggests that instructors successfully accommodated technical and connectivity constraints, mitigating potential academic fallout from widespread rolling blackouts.

SOP 4. How efficient was the institutional support provided during the flexible learning transition?

The institutional support provided during the flexible learning transition was generally effective, characterized by highly rated crisis communication, though administrative services experienced operational lag times.

Official crisis communication from institutional leadership was overwhelmingly well-received, with 95.16% of respondents rating guidelines and announcements favorably. Prompt messaging allowed students to stay informed and plan their study schedules around scheduled power outages.

While support services (e.g., Registrar, Finance, IT Helpdesk, Library) remained operational, emergency protocols caused minor response delays for nearly two-thirds of the population.

Staffing, power interruptions, or remote connectivity constraints on the administrative end likely created processing lag times for student transactions and inquiries during the crisis.

SOP 5. What is the overall perceived effectiveness of Aldersgate College Inc.'s emergency response in balancing academic continuity with stakeholder welfare?

Stakeholders rated the overall perceived effectiveness of Aldersgate College Inc.'s emergency response as overwhelmingly successful.

A combined 96.77% of respondents evaluated the institution's crisis response favorably in balancing academic rigor and educational continuity with student and faculty welfare.

The high satisfaction rating confirms that combining flexible submission deadlines, clear crisis messaging, accessible learning modules, and reduced daily commuting burdens successfully protected both educational standards and stakeholder well-being. Zero respondents rated the overall response as "Poor," demonstrating that the institutional framework served as a highly reliable response model during the energy emergency.

SOP 6. Based on qualitative feedback and stakeholder recommendations, what strategic operational adjustments can be proposed to refine future emergency response frameworks and flexible learning policies?

The qualitative feedback and stakeholder recommendations highlight critical operational adjustments organized across six key themes to refine future emergency response frameworks and flexible learning policies.

First, academic policy adjustments and schedule optimizations focus on formalizing flexible submission windows and refining daily schedules. Institutionalizing automatic deadline extensions during utility or connectivity outages helps relieve academic stress, while practical shifts such as moving early-morning attendance cutoffs from 6:40 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. give students necessary preparation time and a buffer against early-morning connectivity issues during emergencies.

Second, proactive institutional communication serves as a vital component of crisis management. Timely announcements about schedule changes and operational shifts allow students and faculty to plan effectively around scheduled power blackouts.

Third, strengthening technical infrastructure and institutional resilience requires investments in centralized software and hardware. Standardizing coursework onto a single Learning Management System (LMS), such as Blackboard, streamlines assignment tracking across departments, while expanding campus backup generator capacity and campus-wide Wi-Fi coverage ensures facility accessibility during widespread outages.

Fourth, instructional delivery must prioritize accessible asynchronous learning resources. Emphasizing offline-friendly materials such as downloadable handouts, free physical and digital modules, and recorded lectures ensures learning continuity for students facing intermittent electricity or internet access.

Fifth, optimizing administrative services involves streamlining remote support workflows. Establishing dedicated crisis communication channels and remote staffing protocols for key student-facing units, including the Registrar, Finance Office, IT Helpdesk, and Library, helps mitigate response lag times and processing delays during emergency transitions. Finally, fostering a culture of compassion and mutual engagement underpins effective crisis response. Encouraging faculty empathy regarding technical barriers, balanced with student cooperation during modified learning modes, creates a supportive environment that maintains academic rigor while safeguarding stakeholder well-being.

SUMMARY

This evaluation examined the implementation and impact of the Flexible Learning Modality at Aldersgate College Inc. during the 2026 State of National Energy Emergency. The study profiled 62 institutional respondents, a sample heavily dominated by undergraduate students (91.94%) and tertiary-level affiliates (90.32%). While administrators (6.45%) and teaching staff (1.61%) were represented in minor fractions, the findings primarily capture the operational perspectives, financial outcomes, and academic experiences of college students rather than those of basic education or graduate units.

In assessing financial and operational impacts, the modality successfully cushioned nearly four-fifths of households (79.03%) against severe fuel price spikes and commuting costs, although 6.45% of respondents faced increased home electricity and internet expenses. Operationally, 83.87% of respondents experienced power grid disruptions, ranging from minor delays (45.16%) to moderate (30.65%) and major outages (8.06%). Flexible learning policies, such as asynchronous delivery, acted as vital safety nets for the 38% of stakeholders facing moderate-to-severe blackouts.

In terms of academic continuity, the transition proved highly effective. An overwhelming 98.39% of respondents were satisfied with instructional quality and learning modules, while 96.77% commended faculty flexibility on project deadlines and attendance during outages. Institutional crisis support was similarly effective; 95.16% praised the clarity and timeliness of official announcements.

However, two-thirds of respondents encountered minor response delays when contacting administrative offices (Registrar, Finance, IT Helpdesk, Library) due to emergency remote workflows. Overall, 96.77% evaluated the crisis response as effective, with zero "Poor" ratings, validating the institutional framework's success in balancing academic rigor with stakeholder welfare.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the Flexible Learning Modality at Aldersgate College Inc. served as an effective and adaptive response model during an extraordinary national utility crisis. By shifting away from mandatory daily physical attendance, the institution successfully protected families from sudden transportation inflation while safeguarding academic progress against widespread power grid failures. High satisfaction metrics across course materials, faculty empathy, and leadership messaging confirm that compassionate pedagogy and proactive communication can preserve instructional standards during emergency shifts.

Nevertheless, the findings reveal critical operational areas requiring future refinement. The shift placed added utility burdens on a small segment of households, and administrative offices experienced processing delays under remote emergency setups. Furthermore, qualitative feedback emphasizes that long-term resilience depends on standardizing digital tools and upgrading campus backup infrastructure.

Ultimately, Aldersgate College Inc. upheld its core educational mission, showing that institutional adaptability and empathetic policy design are essential to maintaining educational quality and stakeholder well-being during large-scale emergencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the quantitative outcomes and qualitative feedback, six strategic operational recommendations are proposed to refine future emergency response frameworks and flexible learning policies:

1. Institutionalize automatic deadline extensions during utility outages and adjust morning operational cutoffs (e.g., shifting early submission cutoffs from 6:40 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.) to give students time for morning preparation and connectivity troubleshooting.
2. Ensure early and transparent announcements regarding schedule modifications and operational shifts so students and faculty can plan study routines around scheduled power disruptions.
3. Standardize course tracking onto a single, centralized Learning Management System (LMS), while expanding campus backup generator capacity and campus-wide Wi-Fi redundancy.
4. Deliver low-bandwidth, offline-friendly instructional materials—including downloadable handouts, free physical or digital modules, and recorded lectures—for students facing intermittent utility access.
5. Streamline remote processing for key administrative offices (Registrar, Finance, IT Helpdesk, Library) by establishing dedicated crisis communication lines and remote staffing protocols to resolve response lag times.
6. Promote faculty empathy regarding technical barriers while encouraging active student cooperation, creating a supportive academic environment that maintains academic rigor while prioritizing community well-being.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

In preparing and writing this paper, artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to assist with language refinement, structural formatting, data synthesis, and narrative drafting under the strict direction and supervision of the author. The original research design, survey data collection, tabular analysis, and qualitative themes originate directly from institutional evaluation procedures conducted at Aldersgate College Inc. The authors reviewed, validated, and take full responsibility for the contents, accuracy, and final interpretation presented in this publication.

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