

REVIEW ARTICLE

Integrating narratives of working students into higher education curriculum: Equalizer for the socio-economically challenged

Collin C. Ceneciro

College of Teacher Education, Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University, Zamboanga 7000, Philippines;
colinecasas42@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: Socioeconomically challenged students are the prospective source of relevant development in higher education to actualize an inclusive education. Their situation shapes their individual skills which are integral, especially in learning and subsequently becoming contributors to national development as they become productive members of the community instead of becoming a part of the attrition or unemployment statistics. **Objectives:** This study analyzes the narratives of working students, particularly self-management practices, specific academic arrangements, and curriculum features that can be integrated into the higher education curriculum. **Methods:** Four (4) working students, four (4) professionals who were working students in their college years, and four (4) curriculum designers were interviewed to shed valuable narratives and information for the intent of this research. **Results:** The current and former working students were in unison in saying that they needed more priority in the guidelines of educational engagements because they are already economically disadvantaged and do not have the fluidity of time. Narratives reflect the opportunities for higher education to integrate new forms of learning that are inclusive to those socioeconomically challenged. **Conclusion:** Curriculum designers recommend that working students are already tailored to succeed because of their ability to manage resources but would be able to self-manage in reducing retention or longer time elapses in their stay in college if the curriculum and policies in the schools were flexible and lenient to their state. **Keywords:** working students; curriculum; higher education; socioeconomically challenged

1. Introduction

CHED (2010) reported that there were 216 thousand of working students in the Philippines or 8% of the total college student population of the country^[1]. Only half of these working students complete their college because of too much pressure to balance work and school works, specifically as many cannot cope and cannot concentrate on their studies, while some have poor health, while others give up because of insufficient funds. The COVID-19 pandemic forced adaptation to the new normal particularly is extra difficult to working students, who have to work their way to accomplishing their academic tasks while they have to earn their living for survival and for the cost of schooling themselves.

This study used the narratives of the working students both the current and former students who are now professionals to navigate their experiences and how these can be integrated in the crafting of an inclusive higher education curriculum for working students. Such narrative analysis encompasses critical assessment

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 24 May 2023 | Accepted: 27 June 2023 | Available online: 27 July 2023

CITATION

Ceneciro CC. Integrating narratives of working students into higher education curriculum: Equalizer for the socio-economically challenged. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2023; 8(2): 1736. doi: 10.54517/esp.v8i2.1736

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2023 by author(s). *Environment and Social Psychology* is published by Asia Pacific Academy of Science Pte. Ltd. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

on the quality of curriculum. This analysis shed light to the academic challenges of working students and how the curriculum can respond to these.

This study specifically examines the cases of working students in Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University by inquiring on the academic arrangements that are suitable for their situation as working students. Subsequently, this investigation further begs to ask if there are an important part of the narratives which can contribute to the higher education curriculum catering to the increasing number of working students.

The current situation had dragged the education sector into crucial change and sudden turning point. The quality of living decreases and less employment had been recorded. The education sector has also been affected as well as the students themselves. There are students who used to apply for work while studying even before the pandemic, but the current economic condition had made this challenge even worse with inflation for 2021 was at 5.8%^[2]. There are fewer possibilities for employment while the finance for education also changes.

In the context of curriculum development, there were dimensions that are needed to be assessed to craft a functional curriculum. Various theories reflecting student-centered learning, self-directed learning, adult learning, and active learning can significantly impact the overall philosophy of a program. Additionally, other factors such as the need for flexible learning programs or specific student needs may also shape the program's philosophy^[3]. Curriculum changes are frequently integrated into customary quality improvement (QI), quality assurance (QA), or quality enhancement (QE) initiatives and are gradual or progressive in nature. Minor modifications to the program are frequently observed and are typically attributed to internal assessments, such as those conducted by external examiners, or external demands^[4].

Higher education has responsibilities and a critical role to play in redesigning education for sustainability, in contrast to its two conventional roles of teaching and research^[5]. Conversely, technology has significantly facilitated access to resources for people^[5,6]. The development and application of educational technology in education systems during the pandemic resulted in a new paradigm that needed the incorporation of digital platforms in the teaching process^[5,7]. Because of the flexibility of online learning to working students, most were able to study while working and were able to submit their requirements on time^[8].

However, people experience rhythms in different conditions and situation^[9]. As Lefebvre^[10] stressed, "we contain ourselves by concealing the diversity of our rhythms... we are almost objects." Rhythms involve a combination of "biological, sociological, and psychological factors." These conceptual narratives are the foundation of representing the experience, struggles, practices, and strategies of working students. Working students had special cases for academic curriculum because of their work conditions. It is essential to determine which arrangements do working students prefer to manage both their academic and work responsibilities.

College students are most likely be less prepared for tertiary education work. Once they get to college, they tend to spend fewer hours studying while spending more hours working, some even full time. Approximately 57% of college students work while attending school^[11]. Positively, students might acquire personal skills, enhance employability and increase confidence. However, negatively, students who are working part-time tend to achieve poor marks^[12], while it is described that the money earned from employment was typically spent on essential living expenses other than education itself.

There are many obstacles in the higher education curriculum because it did not consider the current scenario of the post-pandemic as well as the many other elements of the curriculum like time, flexibility and

leniency for the working students who belonged to a very third world socio-economic status but has less in the policies and guidelines of the universities. A contradictory philosophy as to the saying “those who should have less in life should have more in laws.”

2. Research objectives

This study used the context of higher education as its specific setting. College students are oftentimes forced to work and attend school at the same time. This study analyzed their experiences through determining how they manage their time and work. Such perspective provided insights on which aspects of the higher education curriculum need to be changed or improved. Below are the research objectives of the study.

- 1) Determine the self-management practices to accomplish their academic tasks.
- 2) Identify the specific arrangements for major academic tasks for working students.
- 3) Determine curriculum features to aid working students’ academic success.

3. Methodology

The study’s overarching goal was to identify relevant narratives of working students and how these salient experiences may assist improve the higher education curriculum. A qualitative design was applied in this study to find deeper extraction of experience and narratives. The exploratory interview was employed in the study to gather deeper information from study participants who had entrenched experiences and narratives as working students. The core of theoretical and developmental research is narrative data. There would be enough written narratives regarding how working students’ stories contribute to the creation of curriculum in higher education using this strategy. Exploratory research is a preliminary study that acts as the foundation for more definitive research^[13,14].

3.1. Population and sampling design

Purposive sampling was the appropriate technique to extract information from the working students. Purposive sampling is the purposeful selection of a participant based on the attributes the individual possesses. It is a nonrandom approach that does not require underlying theories or a predetermined number of participants. Simply said, the researcher determines what needs to be learned and then seeks out persons who can and are willing to supply the information through expertise or experience. Purposive sampling was used for this qualitative research^[15].

The participants were purposively chosen for their experiences as a working student. All the participants are working student or had been a working student during their college days. There were 12 participants in the study to shed light on the narratives of the working students who represented important experiences that may contribute to higher education curriculum development. Four (4) participants are currently working students. Four (4) are currently professionals from different areas but who were working students in their college years. Four (4) participants are considered curriculum developers.

3.2. Instrument

A semi-structured in-depth interview questions were used to elicit important and key information from the participants based on the following core guide questions on the concept of working with students for economic and personal reasons to succeed in academics^[16,17]. This study used unstructured interview to collect the narratives from the participants.

3.3. Research procedure

The researcher obtained consent from each of the participants (all of whom are of legal drinking age) to conduct the interview. If they agreed to participate in this study, all participants signed a permission form. Before the interview, respondents were given specific instructions. **Table 1** presents the research instrument in this study which was used for interviews. The researcher established a program for their unique interview with the authorization and approval of the researcher. The interview session was attended by everyone. The narrative data was examined using coded replies from respondents and themes based on the study goals and developing concerns. Thematic analysis was employed to construct the themes of the study and analyze their ideas of the participants in response to the questions. Thematic analysis is a powerful analytical tool for qualitative research because it is an effective qualitative data analysis method that may extract information in an inductive or deductive manner^[18].

Table 1. Research instrument.

Objectives	Questions
1. Determine the self-management practices to accomplish their academic tasks.	a. What are the self-management practices of working students in complying academic tasks? b. What are their challenges? How do students cope with it? c. What most of working students have trouble of doing in their time?
2. Identify the specific arrangements for major academic tasks for working students.	a. What do you think the school can do to accommodate working students? b. What strategies do teachers carry out to accommodate working students?
3. Determine curriculum features to aid working students' academic success.	a. What aspects of the curriculum helps the working students? b. What should the curriculum developers do to maximize the time for learning? c. How do teachers ensure that their students learn? d. What improvements should be done to accommodate the working students?

4. Results

4.1. Determine the self-management practices to accomplish their academic tasks

Five participants agreed time management was an emerging skill of working students. Time-based processes were the prominent burden for working students because of their shifting schedules from work to study. Time management involves the ability to perform activities within the allotted time. Working students *do their activities in advance, study during free time, sacrifice their sleep, and waking up early*. It was also noteworthy that working students perform self-regulated learning to cope with their academic tasks. These are the major self-management practices the students implement to accomplish their academic tasks on time. One participant thinks that working students are “adaptive and active” especially in their situation which positively influence their performance. Self-management practices were hereby a dynamic process reflecting the attitude, self-efficacy, and motivation of working students.

“In doing requirements, I do it at night at least one to three hours. Whenever there is online meet, I am not able to join most of the time. Sometimes, teachers send the link for the meeting in advance, so I can ask permission if I am not able to join because we are not allowed to use cellphone during working time. This is my problem; I only attended the morning class once. In my case, I can only do the soft copies of activities but for oral it’s difficult for me.”—**Participant 1**

“I need to work because it is needed for everyday expenses of our family and to support my studies. It’s our business. To handle the situation, I study before I work. I am able to attend class at least two to three hours. Now its pandemic, I am able to handle it because our online class is just for limited time; some teachers don’t meet us, but they give modules and activities that are needed to be accomplished.”—**Participant 4**

“In terms of deadline, it’s feasible to give two to three days. The students can do their activities during this period. If I need to perform in actual performances, I ask for permission to leave my work for a day. For me, this is good because we are only doing this sometimes. I apply time management, after dinner, I plan things that I need to do for that night.”—**Participant 3**

“Time management for me because whenever I have vacant time, I study. Even when I’m in the cashier working, I also study, because if I depend on my spare time, it’s not enough. Even I’m working if there were only limited number of customers, I read my notes. And in my vacant time, I read my modules.”—**Participant 2**

“I sacrifice my sleep because it’s 11:00 pm when I arrive home. Usually, I sleep at 2:00 am and I’m doing my assignments in between this time.”—**Participant 5**

4.2. Identify the specific arrangements for major academic tasks for working students

Similarities on the arrangements of working students were observed. Two participants want to recite through phone calls, and all four working students were willing to do modules and submit these during their free time. Two professionals who were also working students during their college adjusted their schedules to be able to attend face-to-face classes. It shows that the curriculum needs to integrate the teaching processes that cater to working students. Although it is evident that the higher education is implementing measures to be inclusive for working students, ten participants agreed that there should be an improvement in the curriculum, especially in terms of flexibility.

“It depends in your work. You can only recite through personal message because you have work. If ever you missed something, call or other means will do. It depends on the situation. I think the main cause of low performance among working students is time; the time how students balance or manage. In terms of deadlines, two to three days students may be able to settle their requirements that they missed.”—**Participant 6**

“I ask my teachers if they have requirements or activities, if applicable, I do module to be compiled after my work or to be submitted during my day off. If there’s online recitation, I ask if I can answer through phone calls. In my case, I can handle my work because it’s not tiring like physical works. I can manage my academics and work, but if face-to-face, I’m willing to give up my work.”—**Participant 8**

“For the meantime, if they give one meeting per week, even at night, they give two hours. For requirements, I’m willing to go to school to submit. When it’s my day off, when the teacher gives activities, I’m doing it at night until I can submit it during my day off. If the teacher will consider, two to three days is enough to finish the homework.”—**Participant 10**

“With the school, there are some minor subjects that we were classmates. But in my case, I ask for other schedule, I look for schedule where I can attend in the morning. Also, the professors should also know if a student is working. Sometimes if I’m absent, I ask to my classmates about our lessons. I also ask for extension because I am not able to submit the requirements in allotted time. Just like in making transcribed lesson plans, sometimes I’m not able to do it on the spot.”—**Participant 7**

4.3. Determine curriculum features to aid working students’ academic success

Features of curriculum to aid the academic success of working students includes flexibility, leniency, training and development, institutional networking, labelling, and identification. Four working students, four professionals, and four curriculum developers agreed that flexibility is needed for the current curriculum to aid the needs of the working students. In terms of professional development and training, one participant stated that there is a need for training of professionals to be lenient to the working students. One curriculum

developer considers the need to have linkages that connect the higher education to workplaces outside the school. It appears that schools were short-handed regarding connecting to companies, institutions, and organizations that offer job for students. Because of that, four participants suggested the need to have a guidance office or department that cater working students. All these were the major provisions for policy development for higher education and curriculum development.

“In terms of due date, maybe two days in advance is good; teachers should announce in advance. Sometimes the students were not able to do it because they are busy, so giving two days allotted time is applicable. Like teachers give activities today, after two days, students will submit the requirements.”—

Participant 5

“It is necessary to have policy because the problem of working students is how they are being served. *How they can be served if they also want to work?* Way back in my time, you may unload some subjects if needed for you to accommodate the number of hours you need to work. It is needed to be institutionalized if the students can work or the school is accommodating the needs of students as they work. So, the schools should be informed about that.”—

Participant 11

“For school-based working, students are given time to complete it as long as they serve 40 hours. When it comes working outside, its challenging because we need linkages to different institution that the students work for. The policy is to have extended time to pass the requirements, they will be given considerations. Like now, students should have limited subjects because it’s college. The number of subjects have effect to students. For college, subjects should be limited for students to sustain their needs.”—

Participant 9

“As a teacher, I’m considerate when it comes to working students. If I know that the student is working, I give considerations even when it comes to submission of requirements. I have students working as security guards like working on-site, working at night; when they are in my class, they need to sleep. What I do is I allow them to sleep during my class as long as they perform good during exams. Also because of schedule, some were not able to attend class. What I do is I arrange the schedule when they can attend during their spare time, my other classes cater them. It is necessary to make ways in developing the curriculum to identify these working students even during the enrollment.”—

Participant 12

“If the school requires attending seminars, the students need to absent in their job. The curriculum itself is designed for regular students only. But it is also needed to be adaptive for working students, but this is still not universal. The students need to perform or have practicum, there is alternative for that. It is also needed to consider the attitude of professors in handling irregular and working students. We are not trained to handle different types of students like those working students. Some professors don’t understand some student came late for their class because they have duty and work.”—

Participant 8

“I think there should be amendment in the curriculum where working students have a curriculum that follows asynchronous classes. Some subjects can be done through asynchronous modality and at the end of semester, students should have something to be submitted. Due dates should not be by schedule like Monday submission so working students are not being left behind. The students should accomplish the requirements at the end of semester while the time of doing these depends on them.”—

Participant 6

“It is needed to revise the curriculum because it is too heavy for the working students. Reducing the units or adjustments to the teachers and professors. By giving considerations, giving them more time in submitting their assignments and subjects. I experienced that. One to three days for students is enough.

It is needed to have flexibility of time. I think the understanding of the institutions to the situation of working students is not enough because professors stick to their standards.”—Participant 7

5. Discussion

5.1. Determine the self-management practices to accomplish their academic tasks

The results of the interview opened new perspectives on how do working students manage their self. The narratives of the working students reflected different aspects and strategies of self-management, ranging from time management to planning. These narratives had specific theoretical relationship to academic management and performance.

Time is perceived as a “dynamic”, “multidimensional”, “multifaceted” human construct that is interconnected with place and subjectively sensed^[9]. Many students struggle to manage their study time, complete their assignments on time, or perhaps even routinely attend their classes^[19-21]. Expectations or stress on students’ time, on the other hand, may impair their “intellectual functioning” and academic achievement^[22,23]. For working students, their work makes it difficult for them to focus on their studies; as a result, they report missing more courses, turning in their assignments late, and receiving lower grades^[24,25]. One working student said that “...in doing requirements, I do it at night at least one to three hours” [Participant 1], she was oftentimes not able to attend to oral performance because of her work schedule. While another student said “...to handle the situation, I study before I work” [Participant 4].

Published studies indicated that working while schooling has been linked to insufficient sleeping patterns and exhaustion and fatigue^[26,27], being late in classes^[28], and increase in perceived stress^[29]. For instance, students choose to *sacrifice* their sleep to accomplish their tasks and activities on time. As a result, students believe that working and studying are “incompatible” because each requires time and effort which they found it difficult to manage. A student manifested this practice saying “...I sleep at 2:00 am and I’m doing my assignments in between this time” [Participant 5], sacrificing her sleep to cope to her academic responsibilities. Although it was not clear how well she did in her school, she revealed that this was the only time she had to study.

The academic success model was created to understand how educational constructs affect student achievement. It demonstrates how non-cognitive factors, such determination (e.g., motivation, grit), as academic mindset (e.g., a sense of belonging, self-sufficiency), academic behaviors (e.g., attending class and finishing assignments), learning strategies (e.g., time management), and social skills (e.g., interactive capabilities) affect academic accomplishments^[8,30]. Some participants of the study revealed they are not able to participate in social gatherings, meet with friends, and have time to hang out because of the nature of their work and education.

Theorists portray time management as a complex process that entails short-and long-term planning, creating and prioritizing goals, estimating time commitments, monitoring how time is spent, and consciously organizing or allocating time^[21,31-34]. Time management skills include organizing and prioritizing work, preparing for exams and attending classes^[8,35]. Students that apply effective time management approaches and study practices are likely to get perform well in school^[8]. In this study, some working students were able to adapt to their situation and perform good or even better than regular students. One student said that “...even when I’m in the cashier working, I also study” [Participant 2].

Effective time management is reflected by one’s skills to effectively spend their time that integrate themselves into achieving their goals while avoiding procrastination, distractions, or other activities that waste their time^[21,36,37]. This study also showed that being able to manage oneself improves the capacity of

students to be resilient, self-efficient, and adaptive to their shifting schedules. Students may acquire soft skills in the workplace that become essential to their academic and professional life, like self-organization, time management, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking^[24,38,39]. One student said, “...*I apply time management, after dinner, I plan things that I need to do for that night*” [Participant 3]. Time management was a common self-management practice that the working students do to work and study at the same time.

Working while attending school allows students to apply the concepts they have learned in the classroom to real-world problems^[24]. “Experiential learning”, or the acquisition of knowledge by direct experience, is recognized by universities as an effective teaching method^[14]. Academic achievement, school attendance, and positive behavior patterns are among the positive outcomes of fostering resiliency^[40,41]. Among college students, Mostafa and Lim^[42] recognized that the resilient group exhibited greater job satisfaction and utilized effective cognitive emotion management skills, including strategic planning, constructive refocusing, and situational rearrangement from a positive perspective. It was clear in this study that working students manifested proficient in managing their academic responsibilities through planning and studying ahead of time.

This study demonstrated that time, as a general theme, was a limiting factor for self-management practices. Working students manifested different forms of cognitive stimulus to adapt to their situation. Self-management, as described, was a dynamic and temporal process that represents working students’ cognitive abilities.

5.2. Identify the specific arrangements for major academic tasks for working students

In this study, there were two prominent arrangements for academic tasks preferred by the participants—the synchronous and asynchronous modality. These vary on applicability based on work setting, availability, and rhythm. Generally, the application of the remote learning modality culminated good academic performance of the working students^[40].

For instance, it has been determined in this study that the setting of students employed within the school and off school varied. Students work on campus in university-subsidized occupations, and the rhythms of term-time labor and academic studies are more synchronized for them^[9]. In comparison to other employment especially off campuses, this one is highly regulated and student-friendly^[43]. A similar theme was also observed in this study where a curriculum designer sees on-campus employment as advantageous to students because it is regulated by the school and policies. Employers are required to meet students’ class schedules, work hours are regulated to ten per week, and compensation is based on university job categories. Students who worked off-campus were more likely to feel “discordant rhythms” between job and education and to make judgments based on convenience, familiarity, and short-term requirement^[9,10]. Teachers who participated in this study had similar observations. They reflected that their school employed their own students to assist professors and university staff which limits the students’ academic concern because the school requires them to work only during their free time. Teachers observed that students who were employed by the school participate in and attend classes than those employed outside.

Working can also affect how well students integrate academically and socially at their university; working students spend less time on campus than do students without jobs^[12,27,44]. Managing several rhythms of school and work appeared to be easier for students who worked in highly regulated on-campus employment where employers assisted them in prioritizing their studies^[9,43,45]. Rhythms appeared to be in sync even when work had little to do with career ambitions. Work-school rhythms were more likely to manifest as “arrhythmia” for students working off-campus in employment with shifting schedules and

extended hours^[10]. While teachers who participated in this study said that it is difficult for students employed outside the school because they are employed in a specific timeframe which delimits them to participate especially in online meetings.

Furthermore, research indicates that convenient and flexible course options mitigate the problems of employment for many working learners^[38,45,46]. Universities and colleges have increased access to working students through online, night classes, and weekend classes for those who are unable to participate in academics, even though competing commitments continue to provide challenges for students^[24]. Among the HEIs that the participants are enrolled into, their curriculum were flexible in terms of rescheduling, asynchronous classes, online recitations, and modular assessment. In this study, because the school implements online and modular, most of the students could manage both their academic and work responsibilities. One teacher said, “... [during my time] if applicable, I do module to be compiled after my work or to be submitted during my day off” [Participant 8]. One student has similar response, “I’m doing my requirements at night until I can submit it during my day off...” [Participant 10].

Pintrich^[46] suggested that college students who utilize self-regulated learning can balance the responsibilities of higher education with other social demands. Afandi et al.^[47] also agree with this context with an emphasis on how self-regulated learning improves the ability of students to multitask. Utilizing self-regulated learning will enable working students to develop learning strategies that will allow them to meet other obligations^[47]. Baltes and Heydens-Gahir^[48] suggested that individuals who manage multiple responsibilities should devise a plan to reduce role conflicts. Self-regulated learning assists working students in planning and implementing learning strategies based on the settings and conditions they encounter^[47,49].

Modality of learning was a significant form of education for working students because of its flexibility and extent. However, participants highlighted that higher education should at least ensure the sustainability of education even in distance learning. Self-regulated learning was a relevant theme for major academic tasks like recitations, practicum, and performances. Because students were not able to participate during discussions, they find ways to catch up to the lessons and ask for advance topics for them to study by themselves. This also helps them allocate their time to other activities for both work and education.

5.3. Determine curriculum features to aid working students’ academic success

Working while studying offers advantages and disadvantages, but researchers have discovered that location matters where working on campus experience positive academic yield than working off campus^[24,50-52]. Lang^[51] was able to determine that students who held jobs on campus generally performed better academically than their peers who held jobs off campus because were able to engage in cocurricular and social activities. Moreover, Gilardi and Guglielmetti^[50] found that students who held a work outside campus had a 1.5 times increased risk of dropping out of school. In terms of school-based work set up, one teacher said that “...for school-based working, students are given time to complete it as long as they serve 40 hours” [Participant 9].

Regardless of the challenges and problems at work and school, working students manage by seeking help from others, either emotional or academic, which fosters an effective individual^[40]. This current study suggested that working students need tolerance, consideration, and empathy. Similarly, Remenick and Bergman^[24] suggested that there is a need to establish support system among stakeholders which potentially help improve the performance of students in both their work and education. Students will feel supported and have the sense of belongingness^[24,40].

As an anchoring domain, modifying practices that “disincentivize” working students, developing rules that leverage students’ job experience, and offering on-campus part-time employment options are all

important^[40]. Students look for assistance to help them develop their academic skills while they are also working to meet their fundamental needs^[53]. Therefore, having a high level of empathy motivates working students to self-disclose the assistance that they truly require. Teachers understand the situations of their working students because they were like them during their college days. One teacher said, “...if I know that the student is working, I give considerations even when it comes to submission of requirement” [Participant 12]. One teacher thought that “...the curriculum itself is designed for regular students only” [Participant 8], and teachers were aware of the limitations of the curriculum in accommodating the working students.

Empathy to working students permits the formation of an environment that encourages dedication and discipline, enabling students to take an active part in their studies and allowing them to make decisions without severe consequences^[40,42]. Through this, Bradley^[54] underlined that learners can create their own learning objectives, determine their own content and development, select their own methods and skills, monitor the entire process, and conduct self-evaluations. Most students, however, struggle to put these procedures into practice, which has led to their growing comfort with the unpredictability of their college life^[40,55]. One teacher said that “...what I do is I arrange the schedule when they can attend during their spare time,” [Participant 12]. One teacher suggested that “teachers give activities today, after two days, students will submit the requirements” [Participant 11] or “...students should accomplish the requirements at the end of semester” [Participant 6].

Additionally, there are very few options available to students who hold a full-time 9–5 employment in terms of standard academic offerings^[24,54,55]. Most of in-person classes take place throughout the weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm; very few are available in the evenings or on the weekends^[55,56]; this is still true even in recent years^[24]. Consequently, full-time working students have few possibilities in conventionally oriented colleges and universities^[55]. Adding additional flexibility in courses, e.g., online, night classes, or weekend classes, or courses available at the place of employment, would provide full-time employed students with more course options. One curriculum developer said, “...one to three days for students is enough it is needed to have flexibility of time” [Participant 7]. Teachers and curriculum developers were concerned on the design of the curriculum in higher education. They understand the situations of some students who need to work to sustain their needs and fulfill their duties. Flexibility of academic curriculum was a consistent description on how to accommodate working students.

Interventions that focus on emotional attributes and how they might be used may motivate students to achieve their academic goals^[8,57,58]. Over an extended period, such a program should explore the impact of these non-cognitive characteristics. Implementing such a program would benefit educational engagement and well-being while also reducing dropout, non - attendance, and depression^[27,59,60].

Furthermore, various research emphasize that external assistance might improve students’ regulating skills, leading to learning improvements as well as “commitment” and “actuation accountability”^[40,61–63]. This must be strongly encouraged, enabled, and assessed if the curriculum wants students to develop progressively toward becoming truly committed and disciplined learners.

Other emerging themes were also evident on the narratives of working students. Writing and tutoring centers, library services and access, personal or career counseling or advising, and student organizations and clubs are common on-campus accommodations, and yet many working students are either too busy or live too far away to benefit from them^[24,64]. There is the opportunity of providing campus services through online distribution, which would make them more accessible to working students^[65]. If online implementation is not feasible, even extending normal work hours past 5 pm or on weekends will increase access to working students^[24].

So far, the offered approaches have reflected conscious strategies (lowering work intensity, having clear objectives) or the pursuit of good job-related aspects (having flexibility), which lessen the incompatibility between work and education or work and social life. However, these strategies are only possible if students are comfortable financially to be able to choose their job shifts and the hours which they work each week.

6. Practical implications

The narratives of the participants provided an in-depth exploration on their personal experiences as current working students, teachers, curriculum developers, and former working students during their college days. Although the landscape of the higher education curriculum was changed throughout the years, necessary changes were needed to accommodate the students in financial need. As teachers said, “...it is needed to revise the curriculum because it is too heavy for the working students” [Participant 7] and that “... we are not trained to handle different types of students like those working students” [Participant 7].

Narratives of working students represent the problems and opportunities for curriculum improvements. HEIs need to integrate these narratives into the curriculum to develop an inclusive and empathic system. HEIs have to foster resilience through regular counseling, advising, student engagement, and organizing activities for working students (**Figure 1**).

INTEGRATE	Integrate and institutionalize curriculum design and teaching practices in higher education department.
EXPAND	Expand the coverage of curriculum among students employed in and outside of academic institutions.
DEVELOP	Develop sustainable teaching practices through teacher trainings, academic programs, and flexible scheduling.
REFLECT	Reflect students' profiles in teaching and assessment practices with emphasis on flexibility and time.
EVALUATE	Evaluate learning alternatives for students with special working profiles to aid continuous learning.
PROFILE	The need for profiling of working students with their socioeconomic status, work setup, and experiences.

Figure 1. Curriculum designing hierarchy.

Most of the participants of the study call for revision of the curriculum to accommodate the schedules of working students. Curriculum design relies heavily on the philosophy of education^[66,67,68]. The design of a curriculum that is centered around the learner can manifest in different ways, including personalized or individualized learning^[3,67]. The curriculum in this design is structured in a manner that is centered on the needs, inclinations, capabilities, and ambitions of the students. Certainly, this study identified effective scheduling of classes as a need for working students. For instance, instead of having 5-hours in-campus classes, the school could implement asynchronous classes on some minor subjects. Students are accountable of their time and accommodating their limited time to spend in school enable them to manage their time for work and studies.

Edmond Short said that “... there is always a need for newly formulated curriculum models that address contemporary circumstance and valued educational aspirations”^[67]. Essentially, because of the emergence of working students and the challenges they experienced, this shed light on what aspects the curriculum has to consider in accommodating them. Although the phenomenon of working student set up was long identified,

the pandemic offered opportunities for further improvement on the instructional paradigm, teaching strategies, and assessment.

A new take on curriculum development was evident in this study. Previous literature focused on learner-centered design focuses on the individual needs, interests, and abilities of students, allowing them to take an active role in their education^[68-71]. In a learner-centered curriculum, teachers act as facilitators and guides, providing students with opportunities for inquiry, critical thinking, and collaboration^[68,71]. However, traditional forms of assessment, such as standardized tests, may not effectively measure the diverse skills and knowledge gained through a learner-centered curriculum. Developing alternative assessment methods that align with the goals of the curriculum can be a challenge^[69,71,72].

In-campus employment was determined to be the best option for students because it was regulated by the HEIs. However, this was also an opportunity for HEIs to amend networks that connect the education sector to the labor force. Some suggest using employment of working students as part of their academic units because workplaces teach more than a classroom does. *“I think that employing students to work within the school campus can help them. They will be able to attend their classes and manage their work and schooling”* [Participant 10]. One teacher also said, *“when it comes working outside, it’s challenging because we need linkages to different institution that the students work for. The policy is to have extended time to pass the requirements, they will be given considerations”* [Participant 9].

Offloading, rescheduling, extended learning, remote access to campus services, night classes were some of the emerging specific arrangements for working students. Although these were widely implemented in higher education, there was a need to harness a policy development that covers the working students enrolled in this type of specialized curriculum. For instance, one teacher said that *“during my time [in college], you may unload some subjects if needed for you to accommodate the number of hours you need to work”* [Participant 11].

The narratives of working students, former working students, curriculum developers, and teachers offered an in-depth characterization on how to approach curriculum revision. Several strategies emerged from the interview which were opportunities for schools to integrate into. This preliminary study specifically offered new perspectives on curriculum design, integrated performance assessment, and blended learning. Such new perspectives create a framework which then be used in designing a new higher education curriculum.

7. Conclusion

Integrating the narratives of working students, professionals who happened to be working students during their college time, or even teachers and curriculum developers who have had working students is the next step in developing a more inclusive curriculum for working students. One essential component of narratives was the value of strategies that are able to adapt though time and space. Providing emotional and organizational support to working students enabled them to adapt to the demands of education and work. Extending deadlines, empathy, rescheduling, and extending classes were the most prominent strategies.

Nevertheless, there is a need to integrate new concepts into the curriculum of higher education. Because of the dynamic and complex systems of education and workplaces, along with their constricting schedules and loads, working students struggle to manage them both. The role of HEIs in this matter is significant because education was able to adapt to the need of flexible setting that can cater to working students through distance learning.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Only half of working students finish college: CHED. Available online: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/lifestyle/youth/06/13/10/only-half-working-students-finish-college-ched> (accessed on 14 July 2023).
2. Summary inflation report consumer price index (2018=100): December 2022. Available online: <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/price/summary-inflation-report-consumer-price-index-2018100-december-2022#:~:text=The%20Philippines%20average%20inflation%20rate,inflation%20rate%20of%203.9%20percent> (accessed on 14 July 2023).
3. Stefani L. Planning teaching and learning: Curriculum design and development. In: *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 3rd ed. Routledge; 2008. pp. 58–75.
4. McKimm J, Jones PK. Twelve tips for applying change models to curriculum design, development and delivery. *Medical Teacher* 2018; 40(5): 520–526. doi: 10.1080/0142159X.2017.1391377
5. Sayaf AM, Alamri MM, Alqahtani MA, Al-Rahmi WM. Information and communications technology used in higher education: An empirical study on digital learning as sustainability. *Sustainability* 2021; 13(13): 7074. doi: 10.3390/su13137074
6. Sousa MJ, Marôco AL, Gonçalves SP, de Bem Machado A. Digital learning is an educational format towards sustainable education. *Sustainability* 2022; 14(3): 1140. doi: 10.3390/su14031140
7. Agrawal R, Wankhede VA, Nair RS. Analysis of drivers of digital learning in COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 scenario using an ISM approach. *Journal of the Institution of Engineers (India): Series B* 2021; 102: 1143–1155. doi: 10.1007/s40031-020-00528-8
8. Amadi WA, Du Plessis M, Solomon S. Will working students flourish or give up? Exploring the influence of academic psychological capital, grit, and time management. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 2022; 36(6): 192–209. doi: 10.20853/36-6-4486
9. Taylor A. ‘Being there’: Rhythmic diversity and working students. *Journal of Education and Work* 2022; 35(5): 572–584. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2022.2092607
10. Lefebvre H. *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. Bloomsbury Academic; 2013.
11. Miller K, Danner F, Staten R. Relationship of work hours with selected health behaviors and academic progress among a college student cohort. *Journal of American College Health* 2008; 56(6): 675–679. doi: 10.3200/JACH.56.6.675-679
12. Faizuddin A. The experiences of working while studying: A case study of postgraduate students at International Islamic University Malaysia. Islamic University Malaysia; 2017.
13. Saunders MNK. Choosing research participants. Available online: https://www.academia.edu/3821166/Choosing_research_participants (accessed on 17 July 2023).
14. Singh K. *Quantitative Social Research Methods*. SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd; 2007.
15. Bernard HR. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 6th ed. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; 2002.
16. Hall R. The work-study relationship: Experiences of full-time university students under-taking part-time employment. *Journal of Education and Work* 2010; 23(5): 439–449. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2010.515969
17. Scott-Clayton J. What explains trends in labor supply among U.S. undergraduates? *National Tax Journal* 2012; 65(1): 181–210. doi: 10.17310/ntj.2012.1.07
18. Kiger ME, Varpio L. Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher* 2020; 42(8): 846–854. doi: 10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030
19. Crede M, Kuncel NR. Study habits, skills, and attitudes: The third pillar supporting collegiate academic performance. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 2008; 3(6): 425–453. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-6924.2008.00089.x
20. Rytönen H, Parpala A, Lindblom-Ylänne S, et al. Factors affecting bioscience students’ academic achievement. *Instructional Science* 2012; 40: 241–256. doi.org/10.1007/s11251-011-9176-3
21. Wolters CA, Brady AC. College students’ time management: A self-regulated learning perspective. *Educational Psychology Review* 2020; 33: 1–33. doi: 10.1007/s10648-020-09519-z
22. Chuderski A. Time pressure prevents relational learning. *Learning and Individual Differences* 2016; 49: 361–365. doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2016.07.006
23. Roskes M, Elliot AJ, Nijstad BA, De Dreu CK. Time pressure undermines performance more under avoidance than approach motivation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 2013; 39: 803–813. doi: 10.1177/0146167213482984
24. Remenick L, Bergman M. Support for working students: Considerations for higher education institutions. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education* 2021; 69(1): 34–35. doi: 10.1080/07377363.2020.1777381

25. Triventi M. Does working during higher education affect students' academic progression? *Economics of Education Review* 2014; 41: 1–13. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2014.03.006
26. Teixeira L, Lowden A, da Luz AA, et al. Sleep patterns and sleepiness of working college students. *Work* 2012; 41: 5550–5552. doi: 10.3233/WOR-2012-0879-5550
27. Grozev VH, Easterbrook MJ. Accessing the phenomenon of incompatibility in working students' experience of university life. *Tertiary Education and Management* 2022; 28(3): 241–264. doi: 10.1007/s11233-022-09096-6
28. Robotham D. Student part-time employment: Characteristics and consequences. *Education + Training* 2012; 54(1): 65–75. doi: 10.1108/00400911211198904
29. Holmes V. Working to live: Why university students balance full-time study and employment. *Education + Training* 2008; 50(4): 305–314. doi: 10.1108/00400910810880542
30. Farruggia SP, Han CW, Watson L, et al. Noncognitive factors and college student success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* 2018; 20(3): 308–327. doi: 10.1177/1521025116666539
31. Aeon B, Aguinis H. It's about time: New perspectives and insights on time management. *Academy of Management Perspectives* 2017; 31: 309–330. doi: 10.5465/amp.2016.0166
32. Britton BK, Glynn SM. Mental management and creativity: A cognitive model of time management for intellectual productivity. In: Glover JA, Ronning RR, Reynolds CR (editors). *Handbook of Creativity*. Springer; 1989. pp. 429–440.
33. Burt CD, Weststrate A, Brown C, Champion F. Development of the time management environment (TiME) scale. *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 2010; 25(6): 649–668. doi: 10.1108/02683941011056978
34. van Eerde W. Time management and procrastination. In: *The Psychology of Planning in Organizations: Research and Applications*. Routledge; 2015. pp. 312–333.
35. Sangsiry SS, Monali B, Kavita S. Factors that affect academic performance among pharmacy students. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 2006; 70(5): 104. doi: 10.5688/aj7005104
36. Claessens BJC, van Eerde W, Rutte CG, Roe RA. A review of the time management literature. *Personnel Review* 2007; 36(2): 255–276. doi: 10.1108/00483480710726136
37. Strunk KK, Cho Y, Steele MR, et al. Development and validation of a 2 × 2 model of time-related academic behavior: procrastination and timely engagement. *Learning and Individual Differences* 2013; 25: 35–44. doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2013.02.007
38. Nunez AM, Sansone VA. Earning and learning: Exploring the meaning of work in the experiences of first-generation Latino college students. *The Review of Higher Education* 2016; 40(1): 91–116. doi: 10.1353/rhe.2016.0039
39. Sacova M. *Campus Employment as a High Impact Practice: Relationship to Academic Success and Persistence of First-Generation College Students*. Colorado State University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing; 2016.
40. Mutya RC, Geverola IJR, Cano Jr AC, et al. Coping with uncertainties: Unveiling the lived experiences of working students in the new normal. *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science-Social Sciences* 2022; 12(1): 112–129. doi: 10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.12.1.2264.2022
41. Wahome TJ. *Who Cares? Student Perceptions of Factors that Promote Resiliency in High School*. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; 2003.
42. Mostafa H, Lim Y. Examining the relationship between motivations and resilience in different international student groups attending US universities. *Journal of International Students* 2020; 10(2): 306–319. doi: 10.32674/jis.v10i2.603
43. Bunn M, Bennett A, Burke PJ. In the anytime: Flexible time structures, student experience and temporal equity in higher education. *Time & Society* 2018; 28(4): 1409–1428. doi: 10.1177/0961463X18787649
44. Rubin M, Wright CL. Age differences explain social class differences in students' friendship at university: Implications for transition and retention. *Higher Education* 2015; 70: 427–439. doi: 10.1007/s10734-014-9844-8
45. Bergman M, Gross JPK, Berry M, et al. If life happened but a degree didn't: Examining factors that impact adult student persistence. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education* 2014; 62(2): 90–101. doi: 10.1080/07377363.2014.915445
46. Pintrich PR. Understanding self-regulated learning. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 1995; 1995(63): 3–12. doi: 10.1002/tl.37219956304
47. Afandi IN, Ismail NS, Asdalifa. Role conflict on working students. In: Proceedings of the Interdisciplinary Conference of Psychology, Health, and Social Science (ICPHS 2021); Atlantis Press SARL; 2022. pp. 145–150.
48. Baltes BB, Heydens-Gahir HA. Reduction of work-family conflict through the use of selection, optimization, and compensation behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2003; 88(6): 1005. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.88.6.1005
49. Clinton ME, Conway N, Sturges J, et al. Self-control during daily work activities and work-to-nonwork conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 2020; 118: 103410. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103410
50. Gilardi S, Guglielmetti C. University life of non-traditional students: Engagement styles and impact on attrition. *The Journal of Higher Education* 2016; 82(1): 33–53. doi: 10.1080/00221546.2011.11779084

51. Lang KB. The similarities and differences between working and non-working students at a mid-sized American public university. *College Student Journal* 2012; 46(2): 243–255.
52. Perna LW (editor). *Understanding the Working College Student: New Research and Its Implications for Policy and Practice*. Stylus Publishing, LLC; 2023.
53. Garcia-Melgar A, East J, Meyers N. Peer assisted academic support: A comparison of mentors' and mentees' experiences of a drop-in programme. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 2021; 45(9): 1163–1176. doi: 10.1080/0309877X.2020.1851665
54. Bradley VM. Learning management system (LMS) use with online instruction. *International Journal of Technology in Education* 2021; 4(1): 68–92. doi: 10.46328/ijte.36
55. Goncalves SA, Trunk D. Obstacles to success for the nontraditional student in higher education. *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research* 2014; 19(4): 164–171. doi: 10.24839/2164-8204.JN19.4.164
56. Fairchild EE. Multiple roles of adult learners. *New Directions for Student Services* 2003; 2003(102): 11–16. doi: 10.1002/ss.84
57. Luthans BC, Luthans KW, Jensen SM. The impact of business school students' psychological capital on academic performance. *Journal of Education for Business* 2012; 87(5): 253–259. doi: 10.1080/08832323.2011.609844
58. Luthans F, Youssef-Morgan CM. Psychological capital: An evidence-based positive approach. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 2017; 4: 339–366. doi: 10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113324
59. Datu JAD. Flourishing is associated with higher academic achievement and engagement in Filipino undergraduate and high school students. *Journal of Happiness Studies* 2018; 19(1): 27–39. doi: 10.1007/s10902-016-9805-2
60. Datu JAD, Valdez JPM. Psychological capital predicts academic engagement and well-being in Filipino high school students. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 2016; 25: 399–405. doi: 10.1007/s40299-015-0254-1
61. Krishna S, Pelachaud C, Kappas A. Towards an adaptive regulation scaffolding through role-based strategies. In: Proceedings of the 19th ACM International Conference on Intelligent Virtual Agents; 2–5 July 2019; Paris, France. pp. 264–267.
62. Poitras E, Mayne Z, Huang LY, et al. Scaffolding student teachers' information-seeking behaviours with a network-based tutoring system. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* 2019; 35(6): 731–746. doi: 10.1111/jcal.12380
63. Siadaty M, Gašević D, Hatala M. Associations between technological scaffolding and micro-level processes of self-regulated learning: A workplace study. *Computers in Human Behavior* 2016; 55(Part B): 1007–1019. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2015.10.035
64. Kasworm C. Adult workers as undergraduate students. In: Perna LW (editor). *Understanding the Working College Student: New Research and Its Implications for Policy and Practice*. Routledge; 2010. pp. 49–70.
65. Quiggins A, Ulmer J, Hainline MS, et al. Motivations and barriers of undergraduate nontraditional students in the college of agricultural sciences and natural resources at Texas Tech University. *NACTA Journal* 2016; 60(3): 272–281.
66. McKimm J. Curriculum design and development. *Medical Education* 2007; 1–32.
67. Curriculum design, development and models: Planning for student learning. Available online: <https://oer.pressbooks.pub/curriculumessentials/chapter/curriculum-design-development-and-models-planning-for-student-learning-there-is-always-a-need-for-newly-formulated-curriculum-models-that-address-contemporary-circumstance-an/> (accessed on 17 July 2023).
68. Cleveland-Innes M, Emes C. Principles of learner-centered curriculum: Responding to the call for change in higher education. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 2005; 35(4): 85–110.
69. Claudia E, Cleveland-Innes M. A journey toward learner-centered curriculum. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 2003; 33(3): 47–69. doi: 10.47678/CJHE.V33I3.183440
70. Sezer B, Karaođlan Yılmaz FG, Yılmaz R. Integrating technology into classroom: The learner centered instructional design. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications* 2013; 4(4): 12.
71. Chavez J, Lamorinas DD. Reconfiguring assessment practices and strategies in online education during the pandemic. *International Journal of Assessment Tools in Education* 2023; 10(1): 160–174. doi: 10.21449/ijate.1094589
72. Chavez JV. Academic and health insecurities of indigent students during pandemic: Study on adaptive strategies under learning constraints. *Journal of Multidisciplinary in Social Sciences* 2020; 16(3): 74–81.