When the COVID-19 Pandemic Hit the Philippines: The Implementation of Online Assessment

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Abstract

Humanity faced unprecedented adversity in the year 2020. Not only did the academic community not expect a pandemic, but even the discovery of COVID-19 itself came as a shock. During times of global crisis, the government and academics have considered a wide variety of reforms to develop an alternate learning modality that meets the demands of today's students. Learning continuity plans were developed in the Philippines to address issues in the country's educational delivery system. One of the normative modes of learning that have been shown to be both practical and effective is online learning. There are still obstacles that students, teachers, and even parents must overcome despite the convenience and efficacy that online learning promises to give. Online assessment is a technique of administering a test online to evaluate the learning and mastery of a topic among learners. A learner's skills, knowledge, or learning ability may be determined via an online exam.

Keywords: Online learning; Online assessment; COVID 19-pandemic

1. Introduction

The Internet in particular has had a profound effect on the way that education is delivered across the world (Kauffman 2015). According to Singh & Thurman (2019), the number of students enrolled in online courses is growing at a lightning-fast clip. The notion and term "online learning" has been the subject of study in the field of education for well over two decades. Online learning, also known as digital learning, e-learning, or computer-based learning, is defined as learning-supporting instruction given on a digital device (Clark & Mayer, 2016). As education has evolved away from traditional media such as books and in-person classrooms, online learning has gained growing attention as a learning delivery mode (Mayer, 2019). Moore & Kearsley (2011) noted that online learning is the more current form of remote learning; it increases learners' access to non-traditional, accessible, learner-connected, flexible, and interaction-rich educational options. Online assessment is defined as the technique of administering a test online to evaluate the learning and mastery of a topic among learners. A learner's skills, knowledge, or learning ability may be determined via an online exam.

Because of the COVID-19 outbreak, academic institutions faced additional hurdles. According to Radha et al. (2020), the pandemic has withdrawn the educational system. During the period of lockdown, these contemporary global concerns prompted educators to consider alternative pedagogical techniques. As a worldwide control mechanism for the emergence of this deadly virus, temporary closures of educational institutions were implemented. As of April 6, 2020, UNESCO (2020) estimated 1,576,021,818 impacted learners, or 91.3% of all learners enrolled in 188 countries at all levels of education. To adapt to the new architecture this pandemic has brought, Chua et al. (2020) emphasized that a shift in the teaching and

learning paradigm is essential. Fifty thousand schools in the Philippines have transitioned to distance learning, with 24 million pupils getting education through online, digital, and printed modules with the assistance of television and radio (The Manila Times, 2020). Utilizing learning resources that are adaptive to non-contact teaching and learning is the most effective answer to the challenges during national or global emergencies. With the shift of teaching and learning modality from traditional to online, assessment procedures also adjusted.

Online assessment techniques allow more flexibility for students with busy schedules or who live in remote locations. In addition, it expands access to education globally. Now, learners in rural regions may take exams and get an education on par with those in urban areas. It also allows teachers to conduct formative assessments and provides a more adaptable learning environment for both educators and students. The majority of online instructors evaluate student learning through quizzes, discussion forums, examinations, final papers, position papers, final projects (text-based or multimedia), peer evaluations, self-evaluations, and reflection

The Philippines is not unversed in online education; in fact, the University of the Philippines was a pioneer in online teaching and learning when it founded the Open University on February 23, 1995. In spite of this, ABS-CBN News (2020) reported that the Department of Education's Learner Enrolment and Survey (LES) revealed that 8.9 million Filipino parents preferred modular distance learning in which their children would study using Self-Learning Modules over online learning and face-to-face mode.

2. Curriculum and Assessment Modifications

Online learning is one of the most effectively used alternative learning delivery modes. Online Distance Learning/Online Learning delivery mode is used in schools where both teachers and students have access to educational technologies such as laptops, tablets, smartphones, and desktop computers which has available online resources and internet connectivity. In addition, the use of learning resources for synchronous and asynchronous learning approaches such as the Learning Management System (LMS) is evident in online learning.

Concise assessment procedures and instructional intervention programs adaptive to the situation should be thought of and studied by educational administrators and curriculum specialists. Dalynchan (2020) stated in an article that universities such as Ohio State University, Harvard College, and the University of California Berkeley are transitioning from a numerical grading system to a pass/fail grading system to account for the hardships this pandemic has imposed on the academic community and its students. She also underlined the need for soft-type activities in schools. Gonser (2020) also underlined the need of providing one-page student activities. Because of the existence of COVID-19, the paradigm shifted from traditional assessment to technology-enhanced online assessment (R. A. Khan and M. Jawaid, 2020).

According to Cahapay (2020), innovative evaluation techniques have been seen in Philippine schools, including using previous grades from simulated exams, using observational evaluations of teachers, and considering the use of previous grades from simulated exams, the use of observational evaluations of teachers, and the consideration of prior grade expectations. However, these expanding assessment methods presented education stakeholders with a dilemma and a conflict. Teachers now conduct formative assessments through synchronous and asynchronous sessions. Teachers provide synchronous, real-time feedback to students through video conferencing systems or cell phones (Liberman, & Luna-Bazaldua, 2020). Facebook pages and other social media sites can also be used as an alternative assessment medium or Learning Management System.

3. Challenges in Online Assessment

In underdeveloped nations where the great majority of students cannot use the internet owing to

technical and financial barriers, distance education cannot generate the intended outcomes (Adnan, & Anwar, 2020). The loss of contact hours for secondary school students and the absence of e-learning resources that students may have used to communicate with their professors are significant contributors to their poor academic retention and performance (Sintema, 2020).

3.1. Challenges in Assessment Faced During Pandemic

The adaptive strategies made by the education sector in the teaching and learning process fully affected everyone, especially educators, students, and parents. Gonser, (2020) stated that, in countries such as the United States of America, Wi-Fi connectivity is an issue for a big percentage of students due to a high number of learners benefiting from the free or reduced lunch program which aims to give free or reduced-priced meals in the US states to marginalized citizens.

The capability of distance education is limited. A high percentage of countries have zero to minimal distance education capabilities. Some countries have better capabilities but very few have integrated curricula widely delivered with a blended learning modality (Patrinos & Shmis, 2020) where a vast majority of learners are incapable to access the internet due to technical as well as monetary issues. Distance education cannot produce desired results in underdeveloped countries (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). The loss of contact hours for secondary school students and the lack of e-learning facilities that students could have been using to interact with their teachers are key factors in students' low scholastic retention and performance (Sintema, 2020). Teachers have to be aware of the things to consider in an online learning set up. These include the use of online resources that will support and facilitate learning of students (Allen et al., 2020). To make more comprehensive and understandable discussions and assessment materials, teachers have to make or provide video, printed, and online materials that could help students learn more. Teachers should be equipped with ICT skills (Zhu & Liu, 2020). To produce instructional videos, teachers have to allot plenty of time just to prepare and edit. It requires thinking and a great amount of time. This is a challenge because teachers find it hard to balance their time for planning, making instruction materials, instruction, monitoring, and other school-related tasks. They also struggle with internet connection because of this, students struggle to submit and access materials online which later lead to delays in the dissemination of evaluation results and students' progress report.

Tran, Beshir & Vaze (2020) identified other challenges faced by teachers and students in an online set-up: 1) implementing activities/experimentations; 2) assessment and post-lesson activities; 3) technological inequalities, and 4) synchronization of student attendance.

3.2. Students and Teachers' Psychological State During Pandemic

Learners and educators have been greatly affected by the existence of COVID-19. Talidong & Toquero (2020) thought that home quarantine, social distancing and work-from-home scheme adds to the anxiety felt by Filipino teachers during COVID-19. The presence of different eventualities in 2020 such as the pandemic may have weighty impacts on the student's transition to adulthood (Cao et al., 2020; Power et al., 2020) Interventions to upkeep mental health and psychosocial advances among teachers and students will increase their hopefulness and adaptability to the new normal practices.

3.3. The Integrity of Assessment in Online Setup

Academic integrity is not about avoiding wrongdoing or following a set of regulations, but rather about being used to making ethical decisions every day in educational institutions (Turner, Adams, & Eaton, 2022). Both teachers and students saw plagiarism and cheating as major problems, despite the fact that neither group had a shared interpretation of the term (Peytcheva-Forsyth, Mellar, & Aleksieva, 2019). Ghostwriting,

like plagiarism, has been around for generations (Dougherty, 2020). Due to the existence of different applications and online sites students are now closer to the enticements of cheating. Academic institutions should implement measures to mitigate the harm posed by particular venues to the quality of education (Lancaster & Cotarlan, 2021).

Moreover, the consideration provided by schools prompted teachers to conduct soft-type assessment activities which led to a dramatic increase in the number of high-achieving students. It might potentially lead to an oversupply of honor students in the future. In addition, institutions must recognize the need for more student participation in the formulation and implementation of academic integrity policies (Peytcheva-Forsyth, Mellar, & Aleksieva, 2019), it will help them develop a sense of accountability for such academic violations. The risks to assessment reliability might be mitigated by the development of assessment activities that are immune to cheating. It is a crucial concept in assessment design to guarantee that examinations provide students with authentic opportunities to demonstrate knowledge. Assessment integrity is essential for guaranteeing a proper assessment system and accurate results, while assessment design is vital for protecting assessments to prevent instances of plagiarism and cheating.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In online learning, students have to accomplish synchronous and asynchronous activities in the Learning Management System or on social media platforms like Facebook. Sometimes they are overwhelmed by the course requirements. And assessment procedure is being compromised because of the delayed feedback on their performance. Indeed, a learning support system from parents, peers, and teachers is important in online learning. Also, students experienced technical problems in connecting to synchronous and asynchronous sessions. In the absence of a physical classroom, they find it hard to focus because of distractions in their homes. They struggle with time management. Aside from the absence of physical interaction with classmates and teachers, the COVID-19 pandemic brought them irregular sleep patterns and emotional stress.

Teachers have to adapt their teaching and assessment strategies to the online learning setup. They use Learning Management Systems, social media, and video conferencing platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom to connect with students and establish class rules and policies. With the lack of available online learning resources, teachers have to produce instructional materials suited for online learning. They struggled with time management and internet connectivity. They have to make activities that would stimulate students' participation and provide online assessment thru the Learning Management System or Google forms without compromising its purpose and quality.

The school administrators together with the teachers and students/parent representatives should create clear guidelines for the Implementation of Online Learning in the Laboratory School. Guidelines should include clear policies on the following:

1. Course and requirements
   - 1.1 Clarity of objectives and topics to be covered in every quarter
   - 1.2 Clear components of written works and performance tasks and summative evaluation
2. Specified activities to be accomplished per quarter
   - 2.1 Deadline submission of student outputs
   - 2.2 Deadline for submission of grades by the faculty
3. Clear schedule of school activities
   - 3.1 Well-presented and specified activities in the school calendar
4. Student intervention program
   - 4.1 Protocols on student guidance and counselling
   - 4.2 Assistance/intervention for students with poor internet signals

4.3 Clear intervention guidelines for students with failing grades

The paper suggests considering crafting course requirements before the opening of the following school year. During class orientation, students should be informed about the quarter's objectives, themes, and the weight and components of written work, summative exams, and performance duties. The coursework and teacher grade submission deadlines should be clearly specified. Thus, student output and faculty grade submission deadlines should be set and enforced. The policies should also warn chronic or negligent coursework submitters of impending sanctions. Teachers, parents, and student officers should also consider a thorough student intervention program due to mental stress and the number of students who often disregard their assignments. It should contain guidance and counselling procedures, internet signal assistance, and grade intervention criteria.

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