

The highs and lows of Online Distance Education

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The transition of medium of education delivery in the history of educational setting has been unfolding. In the Philippines, learning experience is from traditional shifted into the use of alternative learning mode such as online learning. It's not normal set-up among the Filipino learners and the term "new normal" really in trend and applicable today, though when it comes education, online learning is not a new concept. The real reason behind this sudden transition to the school system is due to an unexpected outbreak of global health pandemic that hits hardly the educational aspects in the year 2020.

Department of Education (DepEd) in able to let the education still continue despite the closure of the schools, decided to include online learning as one of the implemented option of learning which is better than academic freeze. It seems that virtual learning education is a way to continue education amidst pandemic .Education Secretary Leones Briones stated that Philippines can never attain full readiness but education cannot wait. Based on DepEd Order No. 030, s. 2020, Philippines opened the School Year 2020-2021 on October 05, 2020 and the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) is used to ensure that despite the pandemic facing by the

nation, basic education still continue without compromising the safety, health of the stakeholders specifically the learners and educators.

Distance learning defined as in any form of learning experience wherein the learner and educator are physically separated from each other and online distance learning is one of these. However, one main concern for distance learning most specifically, the online learning is when it comes to the accessibility of these by diverse learners, it may take as a challenge and issue as some of learners have the difficult status of living, plus the fact that pandemic really became the big issue that causes families to struggle financially and have no funds to allot for their children to be in online learning. Some may not have a computer, laptop or even cell phone to use or they might have fewer resources and stable internet connection at home .In contrary in terms of finances and money wise, online learning said is more cost effective classes than of traditional classroom experience, if travel cost, food allowance and busy schedules are the main concerns.

Technology have a big and integral role in the educational systems today and in the future. Teachers and learners are requiring to use various digital tools and resources to experience the new normal learning environment via virtual classroom. Digitalization immediately serves as a solution to the sudden closure of school due to COVID-19 situation. The use of different online learning platforms is an essential tool that plays an important instrument not just in modern days but specifically in case of global emergency. The devices nowadays have the big contribution not only in entertainment, business, and emergency purposes but particularly to education.

These learning innovation like online learning brought hope and stress to different people. Some stated that face to face classes is still the best option. There is

also an issue on the impact of this kind of learning. One of the biggest disadvantage of having an online learning is that it seems like there will be poor communication, since there is the absence of face to face interaction between the learners and educators. Effectivity of an online class is under analyzing since there is lack of human interaction in learning process, as per students may learn less in such online setting. Those lowest performing learners or so-called struggle students also might likely to struggle more in online. Some may find it hard to adapt the concept of learning, most probably in terms of uses of digital tools which not might be always find applicable to all ages and not user-friendly. In the online setting, motivation can be lessen as students might have experience more distractions and can easily get bored, instead of focusing to online classes, an individual might attempt to open sites of their interests. There will be lots of kinds of distractions might endlessly occur. Also, too much exposure on screen might bring hazards to the health of any learners. Learning through socialization also lessen and students may feel a sense of isolation.

Some advantage of online learning is, it offers both teachers and students to learn anytime and anywhere .It can improve the learner's attendance since online classes can take from any places or location as long as they are comfortable with it. It also said that online education, lessen the expenses which is more affordable than in physical learning.

In the Philippines, the slow- speed internet may consider as a major barrier to clear and efficient teaching and learning cycle. The slow network performance affects also the learner productivity and academic performance. This is a widely known problem as the Philippines ranked as second slowest in internet speed among 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) .There are lots of factors

need to be considered when it comes to virtual education aside from internet speed, availability of gadgets to be used ,even the teachers' ICT skill is included.

The role of teachers and capacity to take charge in imparting knowledge to learners are undeniably unquestionable, one advantage on the part of online teachers, there will be lots of available learning resources ready to use online ,however, even the ICT skills of some educator in the field of online education has been a primary challenge. Some was not totally familiar with the online teaching process. Some teachers, particularly those skilled teachers knowledgeable in classroom-based education might have been struggling to adjust and move entirely into online or virtual new ways of teaching. The different distance learning digital tools play an impact on the learner's academic performance. There's one way to adapt and this is through additional related trainings and seminar to enhance the skills in handling online classes and make it a quality student learning – outcomes.

However, despite the challenges encountered in new normal education, there is still an opportunity to improve the education system and normalize the way education has never been before.

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