

New fad on 21st century education amid COVID-19

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Abstract: Since the implementation of COVID-19, many sectors of society have been in distress. There has been a drastic change in the securitization of global health. By this means, the economy of the nation started to deplete, as well as the industry of education. Some schools must follow safety protocols, which forces them to end the semester early. However, after the schools were put into hiatus, schools reopened their educational institutions to the learners with multiple undertakings and modifications to the educational system. As a result, online education has skyrocketed in the 'new normal' situation. The utilization of digital alternatives and electronic gadgets is highly recognized as an educational tool. In relation to that, the current situation of Philippine education will be discussed here, along with the perspectives about 21st century learning amid pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Educational system modification, Teaching and learning difficulties, 21st century education

1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. This is an ultimatum to mankind as well as to the rhythmic operations of the community. This worldwide COVID-19 pandemic is one of the unexpected and drastic phenomena that happened in this current year of 2020. People weren't expecting that this kind of pandemic would arise knowing the given world's advancements in technologies and other essential innovations, especially in the medical field, that could be used for prevention of spreading the virus. As the COVID-19 virus continuously spreads throughout the world, it has a severe effect on the lives of the infected and uninfected people. It has become a malevolent variable that affects different aspects of the way of life of each person in the world. Things were flipped over and were placed again, but not what they were used to.

The entire field of education is affected due to abrupt changes in the modes of teaching and learning (Toquero, Calago & Pormento, 2021). Education is immensely affected by the pandemic because it is the education which is greatly needed by the youth as they mature and to be equipped with necessary knowledge and skills. Since learning should be continuously pursued and not be frozen as is, various organizations and ministries have formulated proposals for the adequate procedures and protocols that are necessarily implemented abruptly amid a crisis to continue the mission of educating the learners. Furthermore, online education has skyrocketed in the 'new normal' situation. The utilization of digital alternatives and electronic gadgets was highly recognized as a medium of instruction.

In this context, the Philippines, as one of the countries severely affected by the pandemic, tossed out the motion of academic freeze and proceeded to continue educational availability for all Filipino and non-Filipino learners in the said country through differentiated tangible mediums (Toquero et al., 2021). Meanwhile, after a couple of months of being temporarily closed and inactive, the Mindanao State University—General Santos City has officially opened a new semester in the middle of this pandemic which offers home-based distance learning to its students. With this newly implemented way of learning, it has gained different benefits and disadvantages to both educators and students, which will be discussed further.

2. 21st century education amid COVID-19 pandemic

Defining 21st century education comes along with an evolved curriculum that aims to provide and equip students with a wide set of 21st century skills to thrive in a rapidly evolving, technology-saturated world (Jerald, 2009). Schools are responsible for developing 21st-century learners and providing them with a quality education. Due to the pandemic, the distribution of knowledge and training for acquiring skills is arduous due to the temporarily unavailability of schools' face-to-face interactive learning in the whole country of the Philippines as a compliance with the safety protocol in avoidance of the local transmission of the virus. So, instead of continuing the classroom setting as an environment for learning, the government implemented distance learning where the Department of Education (DepEd) led the modification of the current educational system to offer different types of mediums for learning, such as modular learning and E-learning, which keep the learners isolated in their home as a safety measure.

However, as the COVID-19 virus spread throughout the world, access to learning has become more difficult for 21st century learners, particularly in developing countries like the Philippines, due to a lack of budget in providing educational materials for all learners and teachers, as well as disregarded technological services such as internet connection and technological devices (Toquero, 2021), which cause a tangle for educators and learners in having access to essential and necessary information. Due to the abrupt changes, both educators and learners are having difficulty connecting with each other in regard to the teaching and learning process. As a result, a lot of problems arise, such as mental health issues, lack of motivation to learn, decreased enrollment rate, and worst of them all, the increasing cases of suicide. With these problems that have been evident throughout the pandemic, the government and the citizens were alarmed, and it is currently the talk of the town that discusses the concern for the holistic welfare of the youth. Furthermore, most people recognize that the pandemic has harmed the youth and the entire economy.

2.1. Interference of COVID-19 on the teaching and learning process

Fast forward to the current situation: the semester has officially started through online synchronous and asynchronous classes. Throughout this newly modified learning, there are some points where it is effectively advantageous and, at the same time, brings disadvantages to both learners and educators. On top of that, it saves time and effort for us learners in travelling to and from school, which means those saved hours will be added to the intended time for learning. Also, the learners are able to implement self-paced learning at their home where they are responsible for their own time management in learning and exercise flexibility in school work. Lastly, we are able to gain and discover new technical skills as we use technology as an essential tool for learning. However, the downside that we are currently experiencing in this current type of learning lines up with the list, but we will point out the most evident problems. First, students are having difficulty comprehending the content of the lessons within the given modules. Each learner has a differentiated learning style, which means that this online learning is not applicable for all learners.



Figure 1: Online class discussion via Google Meet

Second, most students exhibit symptoms of homework anxiety as a result of having too many complex activities or not having clear and understandable instructions within the given homework. We felt that instead of aiming to learn, it has been colonized by the idea of finishing the activities before it reaches its deadline. The compliance of outputs weighs more than the idea of learning. Lastly, students are having a hard time adjusting to life in their home as their new environment of learning. We are having a hard time making our

home a place that is conducive for learning due to multiple distractions that are hard to eliminate. Also, most of the learners studying in MSU are from remote areas where it is too difficult for us students to have a stable internet connection for attending synchronous meetings and checking new modules through VLE and Google Classroom. The current crisis created an impact not only on students but also on educators.

Students have no choice but to deal with the difficulties of learning during this period because no one wants to be in this situation, and the only action we can take is to continue educating ourselves. As learners, one of the coping strategies we implement is time management. We positioned ourselves as if we were still in a school setting. We set an intended period for learning and set another aside for house chores. Second, create a conducive learning area in the house. It is important to eliminate distractions near and within the designated area. Lastly, as a 21st century learner, one has to be versatile. Globalization is running faster than we think, so long periods of adjustment are not a thing now. Therefore, adaptability should be empowered within ourselves and practicality should reign in our mentality.

Thus, there has been a paradigm shift from traditional instruction to online learning. With the advent of educational technology, the value of online instruction, as well as its benefits and drawbacks on the scope of education, was greatly emphasized. With this means, a new educational environment is emphasized. Online assessment platforms were valued. Online teaching is the bottom line in this pandemic circumstance.

2.2. Repercussion of COVID-19 on academic aspirations

In today's case, online classes were the only medium to teach and assess learners' understanding. It is beneficial for instruction. However, we can see that the government was not geared up. There are many loopholes in administering online classes. First, the lack of available gadgets or electronic devices. We don't have any possession of any of these. Way back before, we didn't have any problems in relation to coping with my studies. If ever there are printed requirements, we just tend to borrow my colleagues' laptops or just explore some internet cafes near our area with the intention of passing it on time. However, today it seems to me that possessing gadgets is already a necessity. In this situation, we tend to join our classmates who own a laptop in attending online classes. The signal interruption is second on the list. Telecommunication companies should be aware that most of the schools all over the archipelago administer online instruction. They should secure the stability of the internet connection. As per experience, it is burdensome. Our pending requirements were already planned out on what time each would be done, but intervening factors won't allow us to do so. It's depressing to think about it, but there's nothing we can do about the loss of internet access.

3. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected all sectors of society. This worldwide pandemic has brought all people to be extremely cautious and to change for the arriving new era, which is the so-called "new normal." The government as well as those appropriate authorities should take action in these situations. The policies put in place should be strictly enforced to the point where no one in millions of people in the country gets a single drop of that lethal virus. One of the essential aspects of human life that has been immensely affected by the pandemic is education. In this century, education has been considered essential as it equips us with the 21st century skills needed to thrive within the competencies of globalization. As a member of the youth, we believe that education is essential because it enlightens us about the world and molds us into holistically well-developed individuals. With that, focusing on the instructional discipline, the pillars of education should take time to revisit, consider, and, if permitted, choose a dynamic way of administering classes per se technology at this critical point.

Regarding the Philippine government's decision to continue the academic year through distance learning, it was indeed a palatable action since it succeeded in prioritizing the safety of the learners and they were able to manifest the idea that learning is a continuous process since it is imperative to gradually and continuously teach the learners for the enrichment of mental growth. However, it is such an enormous responsibility for the teachers, learners, and parents to sustain the needed resources for the modified educational system. For us to progress toward our long-term learning objectives, each of us must play a role in the educational process.

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