

Covid-19 & Quarantine: Online Teaching Considerations Amidst Pandemic

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The emerging “New Normal” brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) poses challenges, not only in health programs but equally within the educational system. Education is in fact one of the most affected agency in terms of student population which is around 28 percent of the national tally (Ramos, 2019).

The rising cases of infection strictly impose lockdowns and suspension of school campus operations. Pressed with the regular opening of schools this June, the Department of Education (DepEd) is conducting a consultation. On its official website, DepEd reported initial stakeholders’ responses favoring an August 2020 opening (Briones, 2020). On the other hand, a study conducted by experts from the University of the Philippines proposes reopening of classes by December 2020 (CNN Philippines, 2020). This is indicative of deferring physical interactions which happen mostly in school campuses. Meanwhile, the Commission on Higher Education advises higher education institutions to adopt the use of flexible learning options during the ECQ (De Vera, 2020). Locked in this situation, the learning continuity is online!

Addressing healthcare are “frontliners”, while the front of education are teachers as “onliners”. Online teaching has long been introduced in the academe but the pandemic had put serious challenges. The following realizations are then proposed for critical considerations in the continuity and facility of online teaching:

1. **Information and surveys to major stakeholders are essential.** All educational initiatives should be conducted with consultation to the major stakeholders. This means students and the parents must be involved. But due to the swift deployment of the online instruction, surveys, if none yet, are to be managed online. An effective facility of online survey supports an effective use and implementation of the school’s online programs. In this crisis, gathering feedbacks of the clients’ financial and health issues are essential for the redesigning of online curriculum.
2. **Develop an enhanced and departmentalized personnel training.** The massive online teaching implementation leaves no teacher behind. Although mandatory, a “one-size, fits-all” training is insufficient. There is a required appropriate training that should focus on the adaptation to the course or expertise. In effect, different departments and disciplines are advised to create their own online pedagogy.
3. **Account for the Fees.** There is a huge difference with the use of resources between blended, face-to-face or classroom, against online teaching. Utility of

resources should account for just fees, including personnel salaries. The refunds made by some institutions must have considered just fees as it specifically mentioned laboratory and library fees (Vilches, 2020). Physical facilities and services tend to be insignificant or reduced during online sessions. While subscription to the learning management system platform requires substantial costs, the reduction of the school's physical services and other fees supposedly offsets financial obligations.

4. **Review and update school's philosophies and goals.** The pandemic have opened realization to the inherent values of education. It rethinks of a moral duty. Education and schooling are distinct. Education is a wider concept that includes both formal and informal means of gaining knowledge whereas schooling is the first stage of formal education (Koshal, 2015). Education encompasses schools, slightly relieving academic personnel their due responsibility by engaging the community. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life (King, 1947). Induced by this crisis, schools are compelled to ensure continuity which demand participation at a larger scope. Vital for review is the integration of dialogue with the social, religious, political and environmental aspects in the school's vision and mission.
5. **Educate at homes not as school extensions.** The desire for new learning did not emerge from an external community. Education evolved from the homes in the attempt to educate the individual person, both for intelligence and character (King, 1947). From its inherent view, the product of significant learning is a fundamental value exercised at homes before the community. If online teaching is an extension of classroom tasks, it defeats the purpose. The decisions made by school officials to give flexibility, discretion, and compassion, up to the point of assigning a passing grade- apparently relinquish the traditionally established authority in schools, turning numbers and grades insignificant.

In the course of the pandemic, while schools abruptly cease to operate, education continues. Together with the imposed recess of human activity, the world's natural healing is taking place, ironically, at the time when humanity is literally doing nothing. Corona Virus had infected some norms and the pressure pushes further into the new world order. All of human energies are directed into one mission- survival. All legislators and leaders see common direction in their social responsibilities. Even poets, artists, inventors, thinkers and outlaws draw inspiration into flattening the curve. Any aspiration departing from the current crisis surmises social insensitivity. If these rigid implementations and flexible measures do not concur with the curricular plan to address the critical situation, it is pointless.

ECQ is not a preparatory drill. We are driven into a real classroom. The following directives are enforcing: physical distancing is a mathematical figure and other safety

measures are scientific experiments; localized lockdowns enhance Politics and Geography; Humanities take the core, discussing essences of life relevant to the situation. Homes offer roles where real responsibilities are performed. Local officials and community leaders are administrators; parents are teachers. No restrictive seatplans, no checking of attendance. Life problems are quizzes unrecorded. No burdening schedules. Home chores are practical arts. Family prayers take centerfold, relationships are enhanced. Children are made to realize that the more important ones are found mostly in their homes. All encounters are the learning process.

In education, the inherent value is constant. Once again, love, kindness, mercy and compassion take precedence in the primary end of education, all found and evolve from homes.

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