



Distance Learning Challenges in the Context Basic Education

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ABSTRACT

This research determines the challenges in the implementation of distance learning in relation to learner's performance in identified schools in the division of Cebu. The data obtained were analyzed using percentage weighted mean, with 0.05 level of significance. Based on the findings, the sudden and rapid changes in the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to different challenges faced by both learners and teachers and cause a quality difference in providing quality education. Results also suggest that there is a need an immediate support from the government and private sector for the development or upgrading IT infrastructure, additional cell sites for internet connection, and furthering research initiatives in every school especially during this time of pandemic. Therefore, policymakers should provide immediate support that will enhance the means of teaching and learning under the new normal of education.

Keywords: Distance learning challenges, basic education, Online learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the world has been under intense pressure to protect humanity from the fast mutant viral illness COVID-19. In mid-March, in response to the virus's extraordinary health and socioeconomic catastrophe, the majority of countries quickly implemented defense laws restricting human travel in try to contain the virus's spread. All sectors were subject to limitations and a suspension of many of their normal operations, and educational institutions were no exception: students, teachers, and instructors were required to remain at home (Hijazi and Alnatour, 2021).

Numerous portions of the world were placed under lockdown or remain on lockdown as a result of the outbreak of global pandemic COVID-19, and the influence of a pandemic is felt throughout many industries, including education. All schools and universities worldwide have been hit by the epidemic, and many educational institutions have been forced to continue offering courses online due to the present circumstances. As a result of this, institutions were forced to undertake an overnight transition from face-to-face learning to e-learning in the midst of this mayhem. Due to the rapid transition from conventional to online teaching pedagogical techniques, institutions did not completely integrate content digitalization (Maheshwari, 2021).

Moreover, according to UNESCO (2020), the pandemic has led in the physical closure of education facilities worldwide and has affected at least half of the world's pupils in school and higher education - 890 million pupils in 114 countries – at a conservative estimate. Forecasts regarding the long-term consequences of Covid-19 vary from a five-year interruption to a six-month disturbance. Forecasts forecast a reduction in enrollment of between 15% and 25%, depending on the region of the world in which the estimates are done (ICEF Monitor 2020). For example, higher education took two years to recover after the 2003 SARS pandemic. A June 2020 debate on how we prepare for the new normal in educational institutions exemplifies the fundamental issues.

Recent research published Hill et al. (2020) emphasize that to adapt to events, the world shifted to distance learning education, to guarantee that students were not left without education in the pandemic era. Balzer (2020) stated that this innovative shift required improved technology and required instructors to adjust their working environments. Notably, with this unanticipated shift away from the classroom, many have doubted about the successful adoption of online learning and are concerned about how such a shift will affect the worldwide education market. Hence, educational institutions worldwide had to shift the teaching delivery mode from face to face to flexible learning during COVID-19.

Scholars have recognized that it can be concluded that distance learning education has different challenges existed before the COVID-19 pandemic started and that the challenges in the current forced environment due to COVID-19 are not different from the challenges in the normal environment (Pather et al., 2020). The challenges are almost the same in every context, especially in developing countries. Hence, distance learning education requires planning, understanding of curriculum demands and assessing strategies for teaching and learning, assessing technologies to be deployed,

determining the assessment regime taking into account the need for robustness, integrity and validity of assessments, and review and evaluation (Wang & Torrisi-Steele 2015). While the preceding account is true for contact teaching as well, the speed of transition to distance learning education (Motala and Menon, 2020).

In addition, Tuckman (2007) found out that students may lack opportunities to collaborate and receive feedback and social support while Rost (2019) found that online environments can generate a feeling of anonymity to students which makes it easier for students to withdraw or participate minimally or completely disappear from the course. These theories showed that students in online learning suffered from anxieties that lead to lack of participation. Moreover, as the world continues to grapple with the effects of this infectious and deadly disease – destabilizing economy and claiming many lives transitioning to distance learning is the most viable alternative so far (Alipio, 2020, Baticulon et al., 2020). The current situation poses great challenges to educational institutions throughout the world. The restrictions and community quarantine imposed on many areas particularly in the country have left students with little choice to learn. Hence, in order for learners to continue education, the Department of Education (DepEd) and other institutions have implemented distance learning education.

In the Philippines, president Rodrigo Duterte stopped schools at all levels in Metro Manila initially on March 9, 2020, and granted an undetermined deadline for resume. In accordance with the public health emergency measures, the Department of Education issued guidelines prohibiting public schools in areas where classes have been suspended from administering final examinations and instead computing students' final grades for the academic year based on their current academic standing. Additionally, the agency instructed schools in regions not subject to suspension to immediately begin administering final tests on a "staggered basis" within that week and for instructors and students to implement social distancing measures. However, internet access is a frequent source of concern among teachers and pupils, as the Philippines remains one of Asia's lowest countries. Wifi connectivity is another issue, as the country has seen on television or read in news reports about instructors and students climbing mountain sides or hilltops to capture wireless signals in order to use the internet (Averia, 2020). Additionally, Adonis (2020) stated that the instructor assumed the drop in class size was due to a lack of internet connectivity as millions of students and parents battled to become acquainted with the new learning platforms triggered by the new coronavirus epidemic. The Philippines' poor internet connection created a significant obstacle for pupils, particularly those from outlying areas.

Improving teaching quality has always been one of the major challenges of the Philippine education system. This study seeks to deepen our understanding of what are the challenges of distance learning faced by learners in identified schools in the Division of Cebu during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also raised the question what low-cost approach can eliminate the challenges while maintaining a high-quality education during COVID-19 pandemic.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive method research design utilizing quantitative approaches. Descriptive statistics utilizes data collection and analysis techniques that yield reports and summarize the important data. Together with sets of questionnaires as data gathering instruments. The data gathered were treated by the aid of statistical software utilizing 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study will serve as basis for an enhancement plan that helps the respondents eliminate the learning barriers and elevate the learner's participation during covid-19 pandemic.

This study was conducted in identified schools: Lagtang Elementary School, Tapon elementary school, Tungkop Elementary School, Borromeo Brothers Elementary School, School-Vito Elementary School in Cebu City division. The location map of the schools under study can be gleaned in Figure 3 found on the subsequent page. The selection of this schools is undertaken in the desire to investigate the dynamics of varied cultures in the schools which will provide representative information on the inner motives of this study. It is the standpoint of this study that no single school culture would provide a monopoly of information on barriers on distance learning education. The respondents of the study are the elementary teachers and learners of Lagtang Elementary School, Tapon elementary school, Tungkop Elementary School, Borromeo Brothers Elementary School, School-Vito Elementary School. The researchers believes that this representation of the respondents will sufficiently represent to reflect the voices of all teachers and learners under this covid-19 pandemic.

The survey questionnaire was composed of three parts. Part I contained the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, highest educational attainment, number of years in service, performance rating and training and seminars attended, for learners it includes age and gender, connectivity, parents' occupation and highest educational attainment. while Part II consisted of the domain used to determine the barriers in distance learning. This questionnaire was adopted from the study of Hijazi and Alnatour, 2020, this study was one of few studies which have investigated the challenges affecting students when using completely distance learning education in emergency situations. Part III will be the perceived issues and concerns from the respondents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several advantages make distance learning become popular and important. Convenience and flexibility are some of the main reasons. With the growing number of Internet users, Web-based distance-learning programs enable lifelong education anytime at any location. Scalability of participants is another advantage. With a proper support of network infrastructures and computer systems, a large number of students can join distance-learning programs together.

Social Aspect

Education is very essential in life, not only when it comes down to academics, but it's social aspects as well. The reason being that, co-operation, honesty, fair-play and, consideration for others as well as a sense of right and wrong are a couple factors of the social aspects of education.

Table 1. Social Aspect

Social Aspect	Teachers		Learners	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
Distance learning lacks personalized connection with the learners and teachers	4.14	A	3.98	A
It lacks the time needed for learners to develop appropriate social skills.	3.72	A	4.32	SA
Social discussions and group activities are limited	3.62	A	4.28	SA
Social interaction between learners limited.	3.9	A	4.10	A
Distance learning makes the learners lonely and disorganization	4.24	SA	4.14	A
Total	3.97	A	4.17	A

Table 1 shows the perception of teachers and learners challenges in distance learning in terms of social aspect. Data shows that the statement refers distance learning makes the learners lonely and disorganization got the highest weighted mean of 4.24 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to social discussions and group activities are limited got the lowest weighted mean of 3.62 which verbally described as agree. This indicates that teachers have seen the challenges in terms of social development of the learners. This entail that there's a need for the teachers to have strategy that boost learner's social aspect in this new normal. Learners' response on the other hand, the statement refers to social discussions and group activities are limited got the highest weighted mean of 4.28 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to distance learning lacks personalized connection with the learners and teachers got the lowest weighted mean of 3.98 which verbally described as agree. This indicates that there is a need for a strategy that promotes group activities and discussion in the new normal.

Coordination

Coordination in management is the process of putting things together in a harmonious relationship so that they may function more effectively.

Table 2. Coordination

Coordination	Teachers		Learners	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
Destruction due to lack of teacher's control over the lecture.	4.22	SA	4.52	SA
There are technical problems that the teacher can't solve during the discussion	4.44	SA	4.54	SA
Difficulty of understanding the teachers' explanation / instructions.	4.16	A	4.4	SA
There are technical difficulties encountering the learners and the teachers.	4.14	A	4.39	SA
There is no enough time for discussion and participation.	4.38	SA	4.61	SA
Total	4.27	SA	4.49	SA

Table 2 shows the perception of teachers and learners challenges in distance learning in terms of coordination. Data shows that the statement refers to There is no enough time for discussion and participation got the highest weighted mean of 4.38 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to there are technical difficulties encountering the learners and the teachers got the lowest weighted mean of 4.14 which verbally described as agree. This indicates that teachers have seen the challenges in terms of teacher-learners coordination in distance learning. Learners' response on the other hand, the statement refers to there is no enough time for discussion and participation got the highest weighted mean of 4.61 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to difficulty of understanding the teachers' explanation / instructions got the lowest weighted mean of 4.4 which verbally described as strongly agree. This indicates that there is a need for the teachers to improve teachers and learner's coordination to address issues in academic aspects of the learners.

Infrastructure

Education infrastructure includes, suitable spaces to learn. This is one of the most basic elements necessary to ensure access to education. School classrooms are the most common place in which structured learning takes place with groups of children.

Table 3. Infrastructure

Infrastructure	Teachers		Learners	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
I sometimes do not have easy access to the Internet	3.82	A	4.7	SA
It takes time to access and attend the lesson.	4.02	A	4.52	SA
The sessions will suddenly be disconnected.	4.18	A	4.61	SA
find it hard to access the school links (e.g., eLearning)	4.22	SA	4.44	SA
The links used for discussions are difficult to be accessed.	3.98	A	4.58	SA
Total	4.04	A	4.57	SA

Table 3 shows the perception of teachers and learners challenges in distance learning in terms of infrastructure. Data shows that the statement refers to find it hard to access the school links (e.g., eLearning) got the highest weighted mean of 4.22 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to, I sometimes do not have easy access to the Internet got the lowest weighted mean of 3.82 which verbally described as agree. This indicates that teachers have encountered internet connection problem in reaching learners. Learners' response on the other hand, the statement refers the I sometimes do not have easy access to the Internet got the highest weighted mean of 4.70 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to find it hard to access the school links (e.g., eLearning) got the lowest weighted mean of 4.44 which verbally described as strongly agree. This indicates that teachers and learners encountered intermittent connection problem during their class sessions. It entails that there is a need a full support from the school to enhance the academic experience of the learners.

Assessment Methods

Assessment is a key component of learning because it helps students learn. When students are able to see how they are doing in a class, they are able to determine whether or not they understand course material.

Table 4. Assessment Methods

Assessment Methods	Teachers		Learners	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
Teachers do not assessed learners in suitable and varied ways.	4.08	A	4.28	SA
Distance learning increases the chances of cheating.	4.14	A	4.57	SA
I obtain the necessary feedback because the assessments are not generally computer marked.	4.1	A	4.50	SA
The number of tests taken is not fair enough to measure the objectives of the subject.	4.28	SA	4.29	SA
The time allotment of the test is not enough and sometimes there's an internet connection problem.	4.06	A	4.52	SA
Total	4.13	A	4.44	SA

Table 4 shows the perception of teachers and learners challenges in distance learning in terms of assessment methods. Data shows that the statement refers to the number of tests taken is not fair enough to measure the objectives of the subject got the highest weighted mean of 4.28 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to the time allotment of the test is not enough and sometimes there's an internet connection problem got the lowest weighted mean of 4.06 which verbally described as agree. This indicates that teachers have encountered problems in terms of assessing learner's overall performance. Learners' response on the other hand, the statement refers to distance learning increases the chances of cheating got the highest weighted mean of 4.57 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to teachers do not assessed learners in suitable and varied ways got the lowest weighted mean of 4.28 which verbally described as strongly agree. This indicates that learners were not satisfied on the ways they have assessed in this new normal and data shows that this way of assessing learners will lead to cheating. This entails that there is a need to develop a strategy that improve the way teachers assessed learners that provide quality education.

Motivation and Willingness

Motivation is the state that can maintain students' attention and behavior as well as provides with more energy to needed to lead tasks to completion. Thus, it can help sustain activities over a period of time.

Table 5. Motivation and Willingness

Motivation and Willingness	Teachers		Learners	
	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
There would better education if it's in a physical classroom.	4.48	SA	4.27	SA
There is no benefit from distance learning lessons.	4.16	A	4.4	SA
Distance learning makes it difficult for the teachers to present different methods and resources of learning.	3.84	A	4.01	A
The materials are available, and records can be accessed more than once.	3.92	A	4.67	SA
Distance learning is not convenient for my time and place and it does not interfere with my sleeping times.	4.32	SA	4.27	SA
Total	4.14	SA	4.34	SA

Table 5 shows the perception of teachers and learners challenges in distance learning in terms of motivation and willingness. Data shows that the statement refers to there would better education if it's in a physical classroom. got the highest weighted mean of 4.48 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers to distance learning makes it difficult for the teachers to present different methods and resources of learning got the lowest weighted mean of 3.84 which verbally described as agree. This indicates that teachers have less motivation in terms of distance learning. Learners' response on the other hand, the statement refers to the materials are available, and records can be accessed more than once got the highest weighted mean of 4.67 which verbally described as strongly agree, while the statement refers distance learning makes it difficult for the teachers to

present different methods and resources of learning got the lowest weighted mean of 4.01 which verbally described as agree. This indicates that there was less motivation in the part of the learners.

Table 6. test of Significant difference

Aspects of Challenges	Mean	Std Dev	z stat	p - value	Decision
Social Challenges	3.97	0.8724	1.552	0.1207	Failed to reject Ho not significant
	4.17	0.5900			
Coordination	4.27	0.7788	1.920	0.0549	Failed to reject Ho not significant
	4.49	0.5002			
Infrastructures	4.04	0.6782	5.242	0.0000	Reject Ho highly significant
	4.57	0.5063			
Assessment Models	4.13	0.5899	3.329	0.0009	Reject Ho highly significant
	4.44	0.6546			
Motivation and Willingness	4.14	0.7834	1.689	0.0911	Failed to reject Ho not significant
	4.34	0.6595			

Table 6 shows the significant difference between teachers and learners' perception on the aspect of challenges in distance learning. Data shows that difference was seen on the aspect of infrastructure and assessment methods, while no significant difference were seen on the aspects of social challenges, coordination and motivation and willingness. Thus, majority of the aspect of challenges in distance learning education fail to reject the null hypothesis.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the sudden and rapid changes in the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to challenges faced by both learners and teachers and cause a quality difference in providing quality education. Results also showed the severity of the challenges as to the aspects of coordination and infrastructure. Further, policymakers should provide intervention that will enhance the means of teaching and learning under the new normal of education. Results also suggest that there is a need an immediate support from the government and private sector for the development or upgrading IT infrastructure, additional cell sites for internet connection, and furthering research initiatives in every school especially during this time of pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

The main goal of this study is to gain knowledge on the level of challenges that teacher and learners encountered under the new normal. It is recommended that schools need to have interventions to address the learners and teachers need in distance learning.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All authors discuss the results and contributed from the start to final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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