

All by Myself with Mr. Google: The Pandemic Education from the Lenses of Secondary School Students

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Received September 27, 2021; Revised October 28, 2021; Accepted November 04, 2021

Abstract Flexible, online, and modular learning approaches are the main modalities offered to continue education in this CoViD-19 pandemic. This study is designed to document the experiences of High School students in their pandemic education during the SY 2020-2021: describing their experiences and identifying factors contributing to their experiences are ways of analyzing this phenomenal issue in our educational state. Employing the Qualitative Research design using Narratology as point of inquiry, 15 high school students eloquently narrated their experiences in this pandemic education. The following experiences were documented: modules are not enough; no teacher, no discussion; learning by myself; and internet, Mr. Google: they are dependable. On the other hand, the known factors affecting the experiences of the informants in their pandemic education include communication is made through Group Chat and messenger, and online discussion is meager and superficial. Based on the foregoing, it is concluded that students in this pandemic education are laid all alone by themselves in the ordeal of doing their modules with the help of Mr. Google as teachers are not physically present to guide them.

Keywords: flexible learning, modular learning, online learning, pandemic education

Cite This Article: Robert G. Pastores, Jerico DV. Dacanay, Michael A. Mayoya, Maricris V. Nanglihan, and Romiro G. Bautista, "All by Myself with Mr. Google: The Pandemic Education from the Lenses of Secondary School Students." *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 9, no. 11 (2021): 660-664. doi: 10.12691/education-9-11-1.

1. Introduction

The CoViD-19 pandemic has revolutionized the educational landscape in all educational institutions across all levels in the world, and Philippines is not an exclusion for this. Likewise, the concordances of all academic institutions to health protocols forbid them from offering the residential teaching; thus, resorting to flexible learning with online approaches and modular approaches in education.

Flexible learning approach involves the digital and non-digital technologies in the educative processes, which is offered in two ways: the synchronous and asynchronous learning modalities. These modalities promote independent learning – sequenced and directed or structured learning environment. Learners interact with varied, rich learning activities at their own pace and choice. These promote cooperative attainment of the learning content under the abilities of learning facilitator [1,2,3]. However, institutions of learning (basic and higher education) should be mindful of the interplay between the learner characteristics, design features, and learning outcomes which are indicators of flexible learning effectiveness.

From this, the learners should manifest high potential to take on flexible learning more especially in regard to the learners' self-regulation potentials. Flexible learning is meant to increase learners' levels of knowledge construction in order to create analytical skills in them [4].

On the other hand, modular approach in teaching and learning is offered under the concept of self-paced learning prototype. Teachers and students work enthusiastically on the learning activities and outcomes offered in the learning modules [5]. It is postulated that students engage in a self-oriented system of feedback with the help of their teachers and peers; hence, they become motivated and empowered to create effective and sustainable Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) to achieve their desired learning outcomes and enrich their own learning experiences [6].

Flexible learning and modular learning approaches had been employed to face the pandemic so as not to stop education from this turmoil. In this paper, flexible and modular learning are used sparingly complementing to the readiness and capability of the teachers and learners. Experiences of the students in these modalities are highly needed to document so as to draw functional plans to better the implementation of such as this pandemic is expected to last in the next few more years to come.

The crux is: education in this pandemic must fuel substantial learning experiences complementary to the desired learning competencies so as to assure the quality education. Education must not be taken into context of mediocrity as this serves as their foundation to undergo advanced studies in the future.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study is designed to document the experiences of High School students in their pandemic education during the SY 2020-2021.

Specifically, it aimed to:

- a. describe the experiences of high school students on their pandemic education; and
- b. capture factors affecting the academic experiences of the informants on their pandemic education.

1.2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Complex Adaptive Blended Learning Theory. This theory is designed to “facilitate a deeper, more accurate understanding of the dynamic and adaptive nature of blended learning with the interaction of the learner, teacher-facilitator, and technology as the learner creates a learning environment adaptive to the technological impingement within their locus of learning. The learner adapts to the new modality with the teacher to co-exist and co-adapt with the pedagogical advancements relative to the new modality. The content to where the learner learns fosters dynamism and interaction at the forefront of deep learning. The technology to which deep learning is anchored is permeable to be seen as an integral part of the teaching learning process. Technological infrastructures must foster scaffolding techniques essential to the development of effective and collaborative learning among students [7].

As applied in the current study, teachers and student-learners interact with known modalities involving digital and non-digital technologies in the dynamic learning environment. Catapulting the turmoil of this pandemic in the current educational landscape in the locale of the study is the major concern of every stakeholder in a complex perspective of addressing its challenges. As such, student-learners must still be in an invite of making their education as efficient as possible despite the odd of this pandemic; hence, they must come across learning in an efficient setting.

2. Methodology

This study employed the Qualitative Research Design using Narratology as strategy for inquiry. The informants of this study, where the qualitative data came from, were the 15 high school students who voluntarily joined the interview. They came from different schools who vouched that they successfully completed the school year. This is the main qualification for them to become key informants of this study. The informants explained their experiences including a configural mode of understanding and principles – the meanings of their stories and experiences as part of an identity development [8]. They eloquently

narrated their experiences in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Two of the proponents personally interviewed the informants to gather the needed data in the study. Before the interview was conducted, the interviewers briefed the informants that their participation in the interview is voluntary and they can terminate it anytime. A consent form was signed by the informants. Transcripts of the interview were carefully transcribed and coded which were validated by a researcher whose credibility is beyond compare.

Audit trail was employed in routing the transcripts of the interview to the informants in ascertaining the veracity of the claims. Audit trail is an in-depth approach to illustrating that the transcripts are based on the participants’ narratives. It also involved a description on how the data were gathered and analyzed [9,10]. The transcribed data were routed back among the informants after the transcription process to ascertain the veracity of their claims during the interview and FGD sessions – 100% of the transcripts were documented and processed via audit trail by the two other authors. Moreover, the informants agreed on the transcriptions and vouched for the veracity of the content presented therein to be analogous to what they intend to express. Henceforth, the data are considered verified and valid.

Moreover, the gathered data were analyzed thematically. Thematic Analysis is an approach in qualitative data analysis that systematically and rigorously synthesizing unequivocal qualitative data into curated and connected findings in a thematic framework of analysis and presentation [11]. Aply, the analysis done in the research includes familiarization and organization, coding and recoding, and summarizing and interpreting [12].

3. Results and Discussion

Education in the midst of this pandemic is confronted with mounting roadblocks that impede the growth and development of every learner. Interacting with the new normal of education including the technological infrastructures, learners learn to co-exist and co-adapt with this new normal through their teachers [4,6,7].

3.1. Experiences of High School Students in Their Pandemic Education

Modules are not enough. Educational institutions particularly DepEd have opted to choose flexible learning modality as the main modality of teaching and learning in the wake of the CoViD-19 pandemic. However, modular teaching is primarily adopted to areas which do not offer good internet connectivity and to those who do not own technologies for the online learning sessions. Modular approach was found to be predominantly teacher centered and limited to PowerPoint presentations and discussions. Students still found as an outsider in the process of knowledge construction and it is evident that the modular approach is least effective as conventional method [13,14].

On the other hand, it is claimed that self-paced learning is highly beneficial to students’ learning as it allows

flexibility, cooperation, feedback, mastery, motivation, objectives, and recycling. These make them realize their satisfaction to activities by making them part of the learning process [5,15,16,17]. This claim is in contrary to what is experienced by the informants of the study saying that the modules are not enough, difficult to learn, and not self-explanatory.

In the case of this study, the informants claimed that the modules given to them are not enough to fuel their need in learning the necessary competencies to the courses they are enrolled in. Informants find difficulty in doing their modules with nobody is around to explain the lesson for them. Moreover, it is also claimed that they did not learn much from these modules.

The following transcripts qualify the claim of the study that modules are not enough in this pandemic education:

"...it is difficult. Modules are not enough..." S2

"...it is difficult because I need to do the modules by myself..." S3

"...it is difficult as nobody is there to explain for me (us). Moreover, we do not have good internet connection to at least search the net..." S5

"...It is difficult when the teacher is absent; how much more now that they are totally absent. Module is difficult, too..." S10

"...I do not understand the lessons, modules are not enough..." S11

"...I did not learn much from the modules..." S12

"...Difficult but enjoyable. Difficult because it is self-learning, the modules. Enjoyable because it is home-based..." S13

"...difficult. I learn the modules by myself ..." S15

No teacher, No Discussion. Facilitators, which are played by teachers on the teaching-and-learning are important factors in the teaching-learning process. Likewise, discussion is necessary for the students to understand concepts which they ought to master. Teachers, therefore, play important roles in the transfer of knowledge and skills in the dynamic classroom.

In the case of the current study, the informants claimed that the discussion offered in this pandemic is not enough and is made superficial as they do the discussion online. At times, the informants are wanting to have more discussions with their teachers as the discussion section in the modules is not enough. They also claim that it seemed to be that they do not have their teacher in this pandemic. Teachers should be encouraged to use discussion method along with the conventional method to enrich their reading comprehension lessons. This assists in fostering intellectual growth, individual expression, and character development [18,19].

The following transcripts qualify the claim of the study that discussion is made superficial as teachers are not always around:

"...it is difficult. Discussion is not enough; it is superficial this time..." S14

"...this is different, no teacher, no real discussion; just depend on yourself and the internet..." S8

"...it is difficult: no teacher, no discussion..." S3

"...it is difficult: I did not learn much as topics are not explained well..." S2

"...The presence of a teacher is still incomparable..." S11

"...I still prefer the teacher explaining the lesson in person..." S12

"...I think I do not have my teacher..." S7

"...difficult as nobody is there to give the discussion..." S6

"...our studies this time are not concrete as I feel that my teacher is absent..." S4

"...I think my teacher is absent all the time..." S9

Learning by myself. Modules are sets of learning kits made under the idea of self-paced learning prototype. Aptly, it is claimed that modules must be understood and learned easily even without the assistance of a facilitator if the modules are prepared well. Modular instruction is more innovative and effective alternative process in teaching-and-learning across all subject areas as compared to traditional teaching method. This is realized because the students are provided the opportunities of learning at their own pace, according to their ability level and needs [20,21].

In the case of this study, two of the informants claimed that they learned the modules by themselves. Learning in this sense was deemed difficult.

The following transcripts qualify the claim of the study that self-learning is observed in this pandemic education:

"...difficult. I learned by myself..." S7

"...it is difficult because I need to do the modules by myself..." S3

Internet, Mr. Google; they are dependable. Learners in this pandemic are restrained from going to residential learning. As such, they are given modules to work on in their respective houses. Apparently, students are confronted on the notion that their teachers are physically absent and seemingly, they do not have anyone to consult with. Henceforth, they resort to using the internet as it offers topics, discussions, and answers at the fingertips of every learner.

In the case of the current study, the informants claimed that it seemed to be that their teacher in this pandemic is the Internet or Mr. Google. The claims of *informants 4 and 9* are clear manifestations that they became dependent with the net while *informant 1* claimed that he enjoyed the modules with the help of the internet. It is as clear as the daylight then that the internet played an important role in the pandemic education of the informants. Using the Internet as a medium of instruction in an online education, the students begin to interact online, navigate the net, search learning content, find learning tutorials, among others [22,23].

The following transcripts qualify the claim of the study that internet and Mr. Google are the emerging teachers of the students in this pandemic as they are found dependable:

"...My teacher seems to be Mr. Google as I get dependent on it..." S4

"...I think I am an internet baby. I depend much on the net. What can I do? I think my teacher is absent all the time..." S9

"...I enjoyed the modules with the help of the internet..." S1

3.2. Factors Affecting the Experiences of High School Students in Their Pandemic Education

Communication is made through GC and Messenger.

Teaching and learning employs discussion and excellent communication between teacher and students, and students to students. During this pandemic, discussion is made shorter and limited due to various reasons.

In the case of the current study, discussion and communication are offered via Group Chats (GCs), FB Messenger, Zoom, Google Meet, and other online means. Although they do it often via these online means, *informant 14* claimed that they wanted more discussion and they think that it is not enough.

On the other hand, *informant 3* realized that they learn from each other through their discussion in the GC. Researches in online learning claimed that there is synergy in using online threads of academic discussion [24,25]. Furthermore, these threads offer the need to reread and understand concepts better anytime and anywhere. The foregoing concordances are claimed to support learning. On the other hand, *informant 7* was wondering on the results and outcomes of this kind of set-up should it continue for quite sometime.

These concordances of the informants are supported by Bandura in his Social Learning Theory [26]. He posited that the affordances of the respondents to interact in the online community draws interrelationship of observation and modeling of behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others in the learning process of an individual learner. These concordances lead to learning brought about by the sustained community of inquiry among student-learners which can further stem into a community of practice [1,2,3]. This further alleviates their learning conditions and eventually optimize their learning state.

The following qualify the claims of this study that communication in this pandemic is made via GC and messenger:

"...updates are given via messenger. I want more, this is not enough..." S14

"...we communicate via GC. We discuss things, we learn from each other..." S3

"...we talked via online means like zoom..." S4

"...we chat and call each other. Thanks to FB..." S6

"...we can talk to each other through chat. I do not know what will happen if we continue doing this..." S7

"...we constantly chatting each other, communication is done that way. It is a problem for me..." S8

"...we use the GC, just like that – no more, no less..." S9

"...updates are done through GC..." S10

"...we discuss via google meet..." S15

Online discussion is meager and superficial. Online learning is confronted with various issues and concerns like time, place, and connectivity. Readiness of the students is also a major concern. Apparently, students view the online discussion to be insufficient. In teaching, discussion plays an important in concept ideation as it will form part in the development of cognitive and metacognitive knowledge and skills. Hence, online discussion should be permeable to the ability of the

students to grasp the concept, knowledge, and skills relative thereto.

In the current study, the informants claimed that online discussion is meager and made superficial and segmental. Contrary to the tenets of an effective classroom teaching and learning, discussions during this pandemic are made shorter due to some constraints, e.g., time, connectivity, readiness of both teachers and students, among others. It reveals that the internet has great influence on the academic performance of students [26,27]. *Informants 2 and 13* categorically claimed that the discussions made are too meager and superficial, and segmental as well.

The following qualify to the claims of this study that online discussion using GC and FB Messenger is meager and superficial:

"...we do it through messenger (FB). Online meeting is scheduled but I think it is not enough. Discussion is too meager and superficial..." S13

"...we communicate through calls in the GC. The problem is on the discussion, they are segmental due to the time constraint..." S2

"...we chat, yes! We depend on GC for our discussion. Sometimes, I go back to our discussion and ask questions to my classmates..." S5

"...through messenger. We do the discussion there..." S12

"...we communicate through group chat; we share discussions there..." S1

4. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing results, the following are concluded: (1) the pandemic students find difficulty in doing their modular tasks; (2) the modules given to the students are not enough to fuel the informants needs in mastering the competencies specific to a discipline; (3) the physical presence of a teacher is still preferred by the informants in their studies; (4) the discussions made by the teachers via online means are too meager, segmental, and superficial; and (5) the informants were dependent on the internet as they feel that they do not have teachers to guide them in their studies.

Moreover, the communication and discussion offered in the Group Chat and other online means including the quality of the discussions made were found to be the factors that contributed to their experiences in this pandemic education.

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