DISTANCE YEARNING

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Knowledge must not be hampered, but what if trying to acquire knowledge keeps the student on the edge?

Before, five to six days a week would suffice to complete someone’s academic responsibilities. But ever since a virus named Corona came, it seemed like if you could have eight days a week, it will still not be enough to do all your tasks.

Just last academic year, schools in the Philippines employed distance learning to prevent the spreading of corona virus. According to the Department of Education, a total of 24,723,533 elementary and high school students, in both public and private schools enrolled for this school year. This seemed to be an answer for the problem of hampering the students’ learning. As a matter of fact, it is somewhat cost-efficient since students and teachers can study on their homes, and not spend time and money on transportation. In this mode, students have two options to continue their education: modular or online distance learning.

In a modular type of learning, students were given modules to answer for a period of time. These modules then were submitted by the guardians, and in return receive another batch of modules to be studied. They were also given examinations to assess how much they’ve learned. Students who have access to the Internet may use DepEd Commons, an online education platform with a purpose of supporting alternative modes of learning. The radio and television can also be used. Meanwhile, in an online setting, students were expected to meet their instructors in video conferencing apps such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc. In there, they would discuss lessons like in a face-to-face setting, only this time they are separated by screens.
But are we really just separated by our screens? What about weak internet connectivity, lack of feedback, the ‘flexibility’ of time, and the lack of border between school and home? All of these take a toll on the student’s learning, and also on his physical and mental health which makes us wonder, is this effective?

For online learners, the issue of weak internet connection has always been brought up. Poor signals cause the teacher or a speaker to lag that prevents the student from learning the lessons that are taught. Our country ranked 110th out of 139 countries in terms of mobile data speed, and that explains the poor reception among many places in the country. Sometimes, there are instructors who are inconsiderate and won’t listen to students’ problems due to weak connectivity.

There is also a lack of feedback in this learning since students only submit and receive modules after a week or two. The students wouldn’t know their mistakes or on what part they should improve on since there is little feedback from the teachers. The problem of different learning styles between each student is also included in this. In a modular set-up, students were forced to learn the topics by themselves, with just the help of modules or reading materials. However, some students learn better when words are spoken in front of them, while others learn through the guide of visual materials. This means that learning isn’t guaranteed for every student since students learn differently.

The concept of time has also been warped by this new mode of learning. Since students are given a specific amount of time to finish the modules, students then can choose what to do first and do it when it seems appropriate. But, then, since students are also children, they also have household chores to finish and their parents’ little errands to comply to. But what happens if the student’s home responsibilities collide with his tasks as a learner? That’s where the problem starts. This distance learning only gives the students the illusion that they own their time and learn in their own ways through this pandemic. But, in reality, the facade of time being flexible, is just a façade, since students
also have other responsibilities. Sometimes they just found themselves bombarded by their responsibilities at the same time.

Some say that it is a bliss that we get to learn at the comfort of our homes, but what if this type of learning is slowly scraping the homeliness of our homes? Not every student owns a personal room where he can study peacefully and join online classes quietly. Some students sleep with their parents or live in a house that’s too small for everyone. We must understand that not everyone has a feasible area to learn and ensure his academic progress. Different nuisances can also bother the student, causing his distraction and lack of learning. Today, school and home seem to be no different from each other since you do your academic responsibilities in your home.

All of these contribute to the stress and worries of students during this time of pandemic. There are too many tasks on their plate that sometimes they were forced to submit requirements in order to pass but not to learn. The desire to learn is there, but the circumstances and the environment where he is forced to learn are oftentimes not conducive leading to different physical and mental problems to the student.

We understand the need for the school year to proceed but we must also understand that it is the system that we need to fix. Let’s admit it, this is not as effective as how it is supposed to be. From the weak connectivity given by our internet service providers, to the lack of feasible areas to study, students suffer every day, trying to digest the lessons. For now, we can only comply and try our best to learn in this set-up. But, hopefully, proper measures will be set out the fix these problems. Going back to normal seems like a far-fetched idea with all the rise in COVID cases recently, but as students, we hope that we can go back to the time wherein studying is not as stressing as today. Through fixing the problems of distance learning, may our yearning for real knowledge be gone and be filled with legitimate learnings that can be used not just in school, but also in our everyday lives.
References:
