TEACHING AGRICULTURE DURING THE NEW NORMAL

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Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, public and private schools were forced to shift from the traditional face-to-face to emergency remote teaching and learning. For the purpose of learning continuity, there was an abrupt transition (Czerniewicz, et al., 2020) and this new mode of teaching and learning is far different from a well-constructed remote/distance education and this may be considered only as a temporary solution to carry out the learning continuum amidst the pandemic.

The Department of Education provided in DO 12, s 2020, the learning continuity plan for basic education through which, the use of technology such as self-learning modules (SLM), video lessons, TV and Radio and the internet to provide learning instructions to students. Primarily, the SLMs were chosen as the primary method of teaching and learning. One part of the effort was on training teacher through the SLMs devised to give insights on the learning delivery modalities that may be used during the new normal.

As a teacher of agriculture, it is highly appreciated that SLMs are created to provide instructions to students who wants to explore agriculture in the junior high school level as a possible career in the future. It can be noted that students do not like agriculture as a subject to begin with. There still exists the notion that the subject is for farmers only and this presents a challenge to the school and the teachers. Considering this, teaching a technical-vocational subject through the SLM alone is not sufficient to develop mastery, skills and craftsmanship among learners. Efforts still have to be exerted to make agricultural education in the high school level more enticing to students.
The present generation of students are digital learners. They have a higher tendency to learn things using technology. During the new normal, Turan and Cetintas (2020) mentioned that video lessons are favored option to integrate learning. These videos can be teacher-led presentations, demonstrations, simulations or learner generated (Panopto, 2019) or they can also be screencasts, lecture or classroom recordings. Video lessons are becoming more popular instructional tools because there are easily accessible, portable and can be played using different devices (Brainscape, 2017) like android or IOS phones, TV sets or computers. The influence of video lessons can be immense as they offer visual learning and animations that can enable students to interact with the content.

Learners who are exposed to video lessons are found to perform tasks better Stansbury (2015). This mode of learning allows flexibility for the learners because they can pause and rewind the videos for better understanding hence allowing the learners to learn at their own pace (Brown, 2020). Of course, there are downsides to using video lessons. To make and play video lessons, equipment are needed and for some teachers and students, they could come at an expense which is outside the normal household budget. Hence, some students may be deprived of learning from this mode because of the lack of gadget. On the side of the teachers, video productions can be time consuming and difficult to script.

However, resiliency is the better part of valor. As a teacher in agriculture, I find it interesting, more feasible and fulfilling to create video lessons. We can let the SLM handle those competencies that can be learned using the printed texts. However, for those lessons that could be better understood and appreciated using visual and animated pictures, agriculture teachers could use video lessons. This is, arguably, the most suitable mode of learning for teaching technical-vocational courses like agriculture. For one, this modality enables students to actually see the real-life version of the workplace, the materials and the craftsmanship that they will be needing if they want to master the skills. Also, these...
materials can last for eternity and it can reach more people than the traditional classroom setup.

There are various ways on how video lessons can be made but we can use the simplest one. A device with a camera will be sufficient to capture the lesson. Of course, having a good script is necessary but teachers are already known for improvisations. We can easily, with very less effort, implement a lesson plan inside the classroom without having the need for a script. What the video lesson needs more than anything else, is the presence of the teacher. Bring a camera out in the garden and show the students how proper agriculture is done. Through that, the teacher is not only able to bring learning to the students, but the teacher is also able to virtually bring students outside their homes, thus mitigating the effects of restrictions imposed upon the younger population due to health reasons.

The current remote teaching and learning setup may be a temporary solution to ensure learning continuity in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the use of SLMs could very well provide for the learning needs of our students. However, this should not mean that we have to stop exploring the possibilities that could enhance learning outcomes. What we will do now, what we will learn and what we do with what we learn during these trying times are things which can help us grow. Who we chose to be, as teachers in the new normal, will define us as teachers of the future.

References:


