TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE PANDEMIC TIMES: CHANGES IN OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION

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Defining the normality of our daily routine a year ago seems to be difficult now. We have been tiptoeing in the center of the changes that affected our lifestyle, our systems, our educational setting, and our workloads. The bottom line is due to the COVID-19 pandemic that unexpectedly occurred and that increased the number of afflicted people rapidly. The first lockdown was strictly implemented even before the commencement of the School Year 2019-2020. The sad part is that our learners from Grade 6, Grade 10, Grade 11, and even the college graduates did not experience a glorious moving up and graduation ceremony that is usually done live on stage. The alternative was a virtual congregation. Everything just popped out of nowhere and no one is to blame.

This situation gave birth to the existence of new educational strategies and methodologies that will suffice the gaps of non-physical classroom interaction. Although most of these ways have been in practice before, these were given emphasis concurrently as alternatives for the teachers and the students. In this school year – and predictably to the next years to come – both public and private schools are relying to the utilization of modular learning, synchronous and asynchronous online classes, television and radio broadcasts, and blended learning.

There were unprecedented problems that lingered in the setup such as that most students and teachers have no laptop or mobile phones, no internet connection, time constraints in designing modules in all of the subject areas, and the overall turmoil is the
inconsistent communication network between the school and the parents and students that reside in remote areas especially in rural provinces.

Another challenge is the so called “Outcome-Based Education” (OBE) that is generally applied in face-to-face classroom interaction. What does this OBE mean? It is a learning model that rejects the stale practices of the traditional education, as what Paulo Freire (1970) coined as the Banking System, where children sit meekly and wait for the knowledge to be spoon-fed by their mentors.

The goal of the OBE is to be in favor of the students not only to show what they know and what they can do, but also to perform how they can do something and in what extent of mastery. The Outcome-Based Education is literally student-centered, allowing the learners to be constructivists and existentialists, at the same time to indulge a freedom of expressing themselves in various ways.

Students are given grades and rankings relative to each other in a conventional educational system and economy. The standards of content and success are focused primarily on what was taught to students of a given age in the past. The central aim of traditional education was to present to the new generation of students the information and skills of the old generation, and to provide students with an atmosphere in which to learn, with little regard (other than the teacher in the classroom) to whether or not any student ever learns any of the content. It was enough that an opportunity to learn was offered by the school.

Actual performance was neither assessed by the school system nor required. This is how we leaped out of the traditional practices and engaged ourselves in the innovated ones. However, another era has entered the scene and is challenging the concept of the OBE. Most of the activities of OBE are done under the areas of Literature and Language, Music, Arts, Physical Education and Sports, Technology and Livelihood Education, Homeroom Guidance Program, and Sciences through experimentation. The question is
how will both the students and teachers engage themselves in a type of OBE environment?

Using modular instruction is not a reform of the performance-based activities. The learners deal with independent learning. On the other hand, blended learning may manifest the OBE if the students will perform a task (say a dance or an exercise) via synchronous online class. Debates and reporting can still be done virtually, but group activities that encapsulate role playing, oral/social conversation, gallery walk, and dyad/triad experimentation are not possible. These are only some of the challenges. In fact, the stability and speed of internet connection are an issue, too. We also find it arduous to teach and learn skill-based lessons such as gardening, carpentry, electrical installation and maintenance, welding, computer software servicing, bread and pastry production, cookery, tailoring, and animation without the materials and equipment that must be utilized and maximized by the learners and teachers. Right now, there is lesser assurance of skill mastery in the pandemic times.

One challenge of the OBE in the pandemic situation was explained by Dr. Jonathan Macayan during his webinar speakership last July 23, 2020 with the theme, Outcome-Based Education: Same Pursuit in the New Normal. He stated that, “If OBE cannot be implemented correctly on a face-to-face/residential/campus-based setup, how much more in a remote (online) setting?” His resolutions were, “OBE in any modality (offline and online) remains the same. Still, all systems and processes in education should be deliberately and consistently aligned with the desired outcomes. And still, schools should put premium to ensuring adherence to the Philosophical Premises and the Operating Principles.” Based on his statement, it is clearly seen that OBE can still be in the line, though the educators will really have to innovate more strategies that will open the gateway to more opportunities where students are not left behind.

Whatever problem is faced, our educational system should remain intact. The future of our nation is all in our hands and our primary clients are our learners. Without
them, we cannot see that catalyst of societal change and improvement, and without planning and implementing, OBE will just be another paper waiting to be used in prospect.

References:
