

Challenges in Teaching During the Time of Pandemic

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The COVID-19 has spared no one. Both rich and developing countries have suffered badly from it. At the onset of the outbreak in the country, most of the cities and provinces declared ECQ (Enhanced Community Quarantine), thereby restricting the operation of all public transports and business operations that are not categorized as essential services. Classes at all levels were suspended initially for two weeks and were indefinitely extended as the situation did not get better.

In spite of the current situation, classes must proceed according to schedule and therefore school and university administrators have to develop a plan to deliver the courses with minimum to no face-to-face meetings to protect both the instructors and the students. A perceived way of accomplishing this mode of course delivery is through online classes that have to be conducted through both synchronous and asynchronous modalities. However, it should also be recognized that more than 50% of the student population in state universities do not have an internet connection at home, and thus online course delivery may not apply to them. To address this particular need, the administrators of state universities need to consider course delivery through modules. The modules will be prepared by the instructors and mailed to the students.

The shift from the old normal of face-to-face classes to the new normal of remote learning entails many challenges to both instructors and students. On the side of the instructors, the amount of workload involved in the preparation of teaching materials in this new normal situation has doubled compared to the old normal. To cater both groups of students who have internet access and those who do not have, 2 types of teaching materials have to be prepared as compared to the old normal where only one type of teaching material is necessary. This transition to the new method of teaching requires a shift in mindset. This transition will inevitably affect the emotional and psychological aspects of the teachers and thus crucial emotional and psychological scaffolds would be necessary for this new paradigm of teaching to keep the sanity of the teachers intact.

One of the most challenging parts of teaching from home is the increasing blur between work mode and home mode. Maintaining a work-life balance in a teaching career during this time of pandemic is indeed a real struggle. To maintain strong mental health, mechanisms to cope must be seriously considered. With the double amount of workload accompanying the new teaching

modality, it is important to plan activities to curb teacher burnout. It should be recognized that trial and plenty of error are expected, and thus we need not be harsh on ourselves. With everyone still trying to embrace this new normal, it would help reduce the workload considering that students are also suffering and still trying to adjust to this new learning set-up. With everyone working from home, the feeling of isolation can also become serious and may significantly affect the learning process of the students. Hence, reducing the content of a given course may be advisable not to overwhelm the students who may be suffering from feelings of isolation. In the end, it is not how much content is delivered, but it is the quality of learning the students have gained. Most importantly, survival from this pandemic should be the utmost priority of everyone, and it is necessary to stay above the crisis we are currently facing brought about by the unseen enemy while we work towards regaining normalcy.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Received 27th July 2020; Accepted 27th July 2020

<https://doi.org/10.52751/dnse9651>
